The background is a deep blue with a complex pattern of glowing binary code (0s and 1s) and faint, intersecting lines that suggest a global network or data flow. The main title is written in a large, bold, sans-serif font, with the first letter of each word in yellow and the rest in white. The text is arranged in a slightly curved, descending manner from top-left to bottom-right.

E I C O N

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ATHENS 2006

- What is Media Education?
 - Thinking critically
 - Thinking historically
- On Memory:
 - Revisiting the past
 - Remembering the future

Education in Information and Comm



SY.N.T.H.E.S.I.
Athens



With the support of the
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Kulturring Institute
Berlin

unication, through **O**riginal **N**etworks

M e d i a E d u c a t i o n a c r o s s t h e C u r r i c u l u m

SUBMISSION OF MANUSCRIPTS

EICON publishes original pieces of work (either theoretical or practical) and notes in English. Preference is given to work which combines the traditional forms of text with iconic and/or electronic once, incorporates cross-national applications and/or exhibits wide general relevance. Submitted work should not normally exceed 2000 words and should be submitted with a summary of about 200 words. Notes may be short reports or case studies based on the critical deconstruction of educational and social issues. Such notes will be included in a specific section entitled Active European Citizenship: The Citizens' Forum. They should not exceed 500 words. All authors should include a brief biographical note. No honorarium is paid. No works should be submitted simultaneously to another journal.

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Forward

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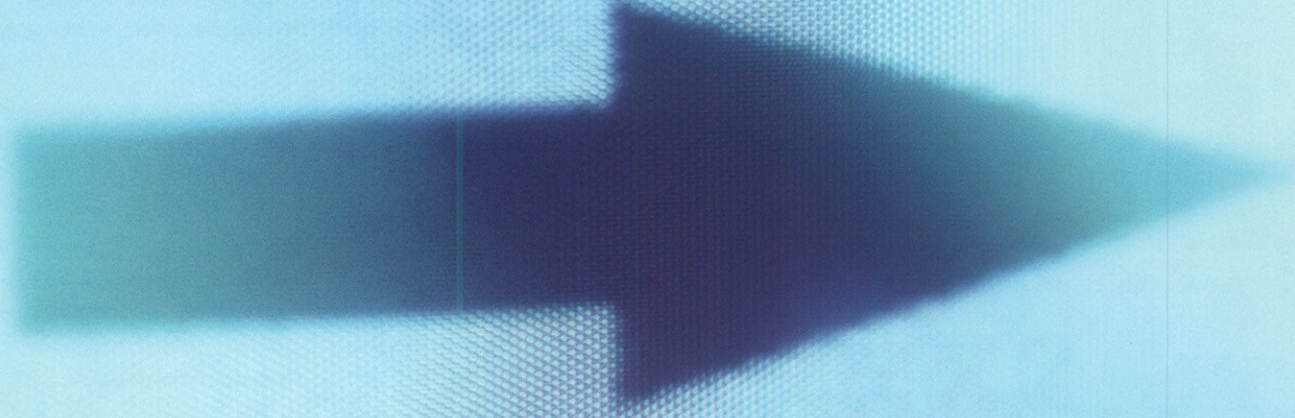
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The material included in this first issue of the periodical has been evaluated through its application in different educational contexts and cultural backgrounds. It was welcomed with enthusiasm in all of them and, thus, we would like to thank participants in the activities where the material was applied and evaluated for their comments and encouragement. In particular, we would like to thank:

- The M.E.A.C. (www.mediaeducation.net) partners from England, Germany, Greece, Poland, Spain and Sweden. Particular thanks are due to the coordinator of the MEAC project, Mr Armin Hottmann, for his insight to welcome the importance of the publication of *EICON*.
- The SY.N.T.H.E.S.I. partners from England, Greece, Italy and Spain, as well as *heuristic educators*, who are members of the Transnational Interdisciplinary Society SY.N.T.H.E.S.I: *The Heuristic Teachers' Society* (www.syn-thesi.gr).
- Participants in the International Conference entitled "*Information in the Digital Communication Era: Towards Media Education Across the Curriculum*" organized by SY.N.T.H.E.S.I. and the Kulturring Institute, held at Athens University in 2004 in the context of the M.E.A.C. project.
- Participants (educators and university students) in the *invited symposium* entitled "The Issue of Memory in the Era of Digital Communication and the Role of Counselling: A Critical Approach", organized by SY.N.T.H.E.S.I. in the context of the International Conference implemented at Panteio University, Athens, in March 2006.
- Participants (educators and students) from the University of Valladolid (Segovia, Spain) who responded to the material of the second practical activity very positively. In particular we would like to thank Professor Alfonso Gutiérrez Martín for the organization of the two-day conference, as well as Professor Roberto Aparici for his very positive comments and feedback in the context of his role as an external evaluator.
- Participants (mainly educators from European Universities as well as from U.S.A.) for their very positive response to the model of Critical Education and Cross-border Pedagogy, as well as to the first practical activity, presented during the first day of the four-day International Conference organized by Adam Mickiewicz University - Poznań, Poland in June 2006.

- Participants of the four-day International Symposium of twenty *global experts* and the International Conference organized by and held in the Saxion Universities, Holland, in June 2006, for their very positive response both to the model of Critical Education, as well as to the practical activity on memory and the DVD accompanying it. In particular, we would like to thank Professors Teun Velders from Holland and Roberto Muffoletto from the United States. We also wish to thank the postgraduate students of the above University who participated in the Conference and offered their enthusiastic comments. These were students from European countries, as well as from China, Iran, Vietnam, Hong Kong and other countries.
- To all those institutions which supported activities (i.e. International Conferences and seminars) organized by *SY.N.TH.E.SI.* in the context of which the Model of Critical Education and Cross-border Pedagogy, as well as the practical activities were implemented and evaluated. In particular, we would like to thank: *The Central Athens University*, and *The British Council*.

Particular thanks are due to:

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- The Hellenic Ministry of Education, as well as the Hellenic Ministry of Culture.
- The Hellenic Television Channel (E.T.), for the permission to include in the DVD of the support material a short extract from the opening ceremony of the Olympic Games held in Athens in 2004.
- Mr Danis Katranidis, well-known Greek actor and director, for his kind participation in the context of the DVD production on the issue of *Memory*.
- All the painters who allowed the use of their paintings as material related to iconic texts for the part of the scenario on "revisiting the future" and the role of memory, namely: *Professor Teun Velders* -Holland-, *Professor Achilleas Aivazoglou* -Greece-, *Mr Ian Marke* -France-, *Mrs Katerina Lazaki* -Greece-, *Mrs Suzanna Papapavlou* -Greece.

- The musicians who provided us with the music included in the support material of *EICON*, namely: *Mrs Evanthia Reboutsika*, for permission to use the song "A Flash in the Vosporos" (Λάμψη στο Βόσπορο), from the successful film "Politiki Kouzina" (Πολίτικη Κουζίνα). The song is included in the Slide show Presentation of Practical Activity II. Also *Mr Nikolas Peliouris* whose musical pieces have enriched the DVD presentation on the issue of *Memory*.
- The photographers, *Mr S. Vogiatzis* and *Mrs V. Bara* for permission to use their photographic material.

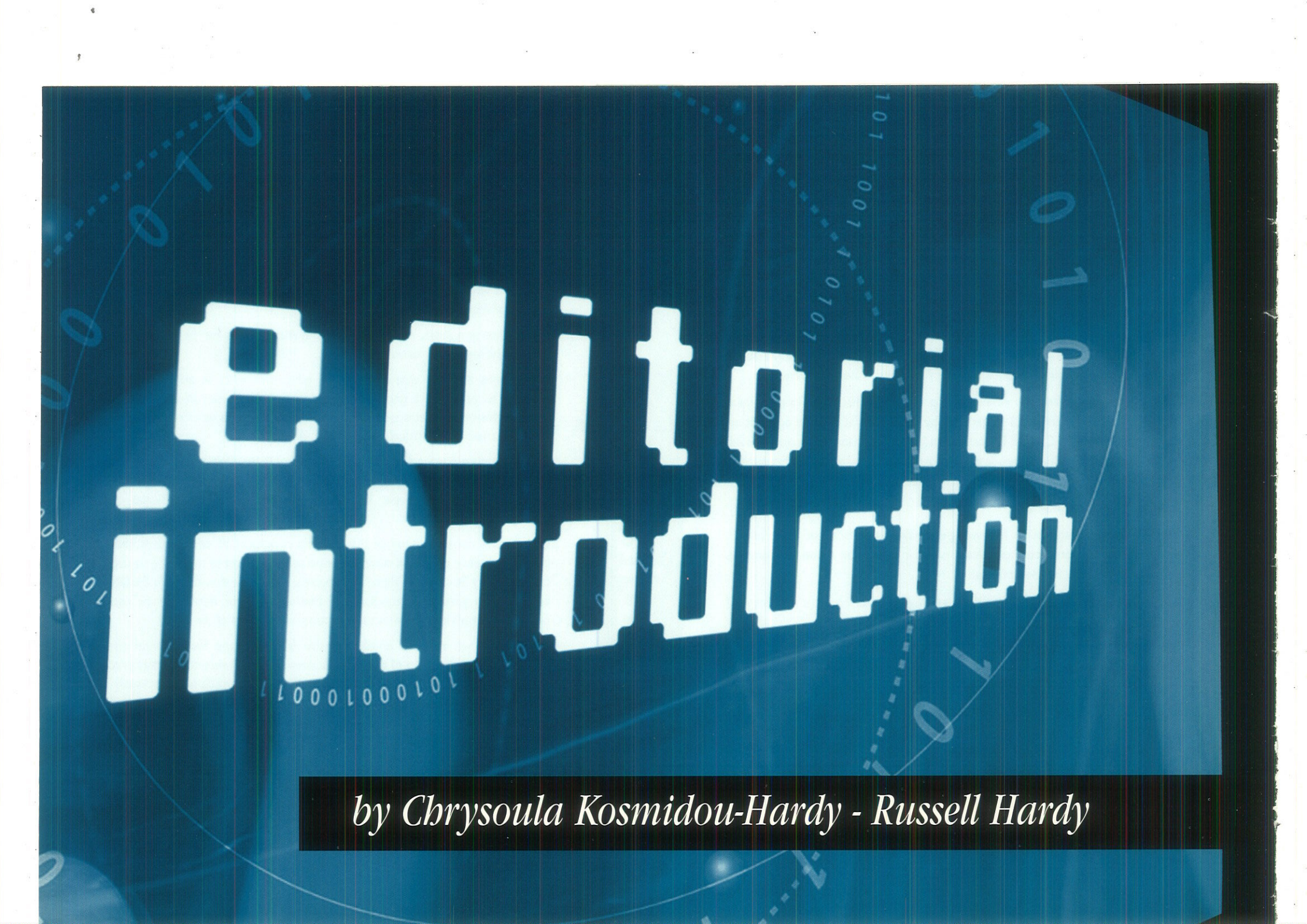
Our thanks are also due to all those educators who, in an *agonistic* spirit, struggle to promote a genuine educational environment in the midst of a, usually, gloomy educational reality. These are teachers who refuse to be led to resignation from critical and hopeful ideas.

EICON aims to function as a *heuristic* network intending to support all those who want to leave the routine and the entrapping logic of what seems to be the 'easy' way out of the limitations of the gloomy educational reality mentioned above.

One of the consequences of the present condition of education is the fact that the teacher does not often function as a "*gymnast of the soul*", to use the term used by Socrates in Plato's *Protagoras*. We hope that through *EICON* the teacher as a *gymnast of the soul* will find support for her/his work and for promoting knowledge which can function as the *food of the soul*.

Concluding, we wish to emphasize the fact that one fundamental aim of *EICON* is the promotion of the *dialectic relationship between theory and practice*; the orientation, that is, to the educational practice which is consciously and systematically based on a more concrete and clear theoretical background but which also leads to the enrichment of existing theory and the production of theory through self-reflection and reflection on the educational *praxis* -in the Aristotelian meaning of the term; that is, *praxis with phronesis*.

Therefore, this first issue of the periodical is dedicated to these genuine educators who are invited to join us and collaborate with us for the promotion of such educational aims, as well as of Media Education Across the Curriculum.



editorial introduction

by Chrysoula Kosmidou-Hardy - Russell Hardy

Through research in the relevant literature, intensive work in the field of education and training, writing and publishing, as well as through a flexible and reflective attitude to the changing reality of our times, we have come to realize that it should by now be quite clear to informed citizens that, although we live in the information era, we are not always informed. Information, rather than empowering, often functions as a kind of authority which is open to some, orienting them successfully to work and life choices and destinations, while disorienting others who either do not have access to it or have developed a defensive attitude towards its newer forms or texts for which they seem to be unprepared, lacking in new (or *post*) literacy knowledge and skills.

In the context of globalization, what needs to be developed is knowledge, strategies and methods which will effectively help the person confidently face information networks and texts, especially the iconic text or the text of the *eicon*¹. *EICON* as a periodical aims to support teachers through providing specific knowledge required for the critical deconstruction of media and electronic communication texts with particular emphasis on deconstructing iconic texts. It also aims to encourage educationalists to become involved in the production of knowledge, in the area of Media Education in particular and in education in general, through new forms of communicative texts using Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in a creative and artistic way.

Imagology insists that the word is never simply a word but is always also an image. The audiovisual trace of the word involves an inescapable materiality that can be thought only if it is figured. The abiding question for conceptual reflection is:
*How to (dis)figure the wor(l)d.*²

The present issue of *EICON* combines the printed form with an accompanying CD Rom which includes: a PowerPoint presentation as support material for the first practical activity included in the second part, as well as a PowerPoint presentation and a video which are both support material for the second practical activity³. Thus, traditional text forms are “married” with new ones. It is intended that in the future this periodical can function as a network hub for reflective practitioners working in the field of education giving emphasis to the fields of: *Education, Communication, Arts and Culture*. Also envisaged is a contribution to educational and social change through the promotion of a new “grammar” and “syntax” based on semeiology, agreeing with Taylor and Saarinen (*ibid*) that: “Philosophies have interpreted the world; the point is to change the images through which we live”.

EICON is also expected to eventually function as a forum which will be a basis for the dissemination of theoretical and practical material produced by educators, as well as students and other social partners, and for the coordination of activities which aim to support the development of the readership’s critical thinking. Another of the basic objectives of *EICON* is to promote the philosophy and methodology of Media Education across the curriculum using innovative material, in its content and form, attempting to produce and promote *alternative texts* to the dominant ones produced by the media.

1 From the Greek word *EICQN*, i.e. “image”

2 Taylor, M.C. and Saarinen, E. (1994), *Imagologies: Media Philosophy*. London: Routledge

3 Two versions are provided to suit individual teaching style. The Second version plays straight through and the first requires prompting from the facilitator.



From right to left: Armin Hottmann (Coordinator of the project, Kulturring Institute, Germany), Chrysoula Kosmidou-Hardy (Pedagogical Institute, Greece), Robert Ferguson (London University, U.K.), Mariusz Kakolewicz⁴ (Adam Mickiewicz University, Poland), Alfonso Gutiérrez Martín (Valladolid University, Spain), Henrik Göthberg (Orsaskolan, Sweden) and (front) Rocio A. Gomez (Schoolteacher, Spain).

The idea for this periodical was conceived in the context of a previous European project, coordinated by Kosmidou-Hardy from 1999 to 2002, having the acronym **SY.N.TH.E.SI** - **SY**nergetic **New TH**esis for **E**uropean education **SI**mera⁴. This idea of the periodical was shared by Kosmidou-Hardy with the transnational partners, Dr Franco di Cataldo (representing Istituto Regionale per la Ricerca Educativa del Veneto -IRE- and, latterly, Liceo Artistico Statale di Venezia, Italy), Begona Moreno Chaves (representing the Spanish Ministry of Education and Culture) and Dr Alan Clarke (representing the Sheffield College and, subsequently, the Southport College, UK). They all embraced the idea with enthusiasm and basic issues relating to the nature and aims of the periodical were discussed. Taking this opportunity, thanks are due to all the transnational partners and their institutions for their collaboration in the project. The periodical, however, was due to be realized in the context of a different European project, that of **M.E.A.C.: Media Education Across the Curriculum**. The general focus of this project has been to promote the critical reading of media texts with the aim of supporting the development of students' and citizens' critical thought which, as a result, can protect them from distorted information. The main partners in the context of this project are shown in the photograph⁵.

The intended readership is envisioned as being educators working in the context of Secondary Education where the subject of M.E. is applied. However, because of the general aim of the periodical, as expressed here in this editorial introduction, and the interdisciplinary nature of M.E., as well as its methodology which is based on experiential learning rather than on *ex cathedra* teaching, these activities can be used in the context of teaching different subjects across the curriculum through a "cross-border" pedagogy and in different educational contexts.

This first issue of *EICON* comprises two parts. Part I is more theoretically oriented and will thus cover basic theoretical issues related to Media Education and education in general. Part II includes two practical activities suggested for use by the M.E. practitioner in particular and the educationalist in general. Four important matters involved in our critical approach to Media Education are:

- **The way Media Education is defined**
- **The way Media Education can be promoted across the curriculum**
- **The relationship between theory and practice**
- **The role of history in Media Education**

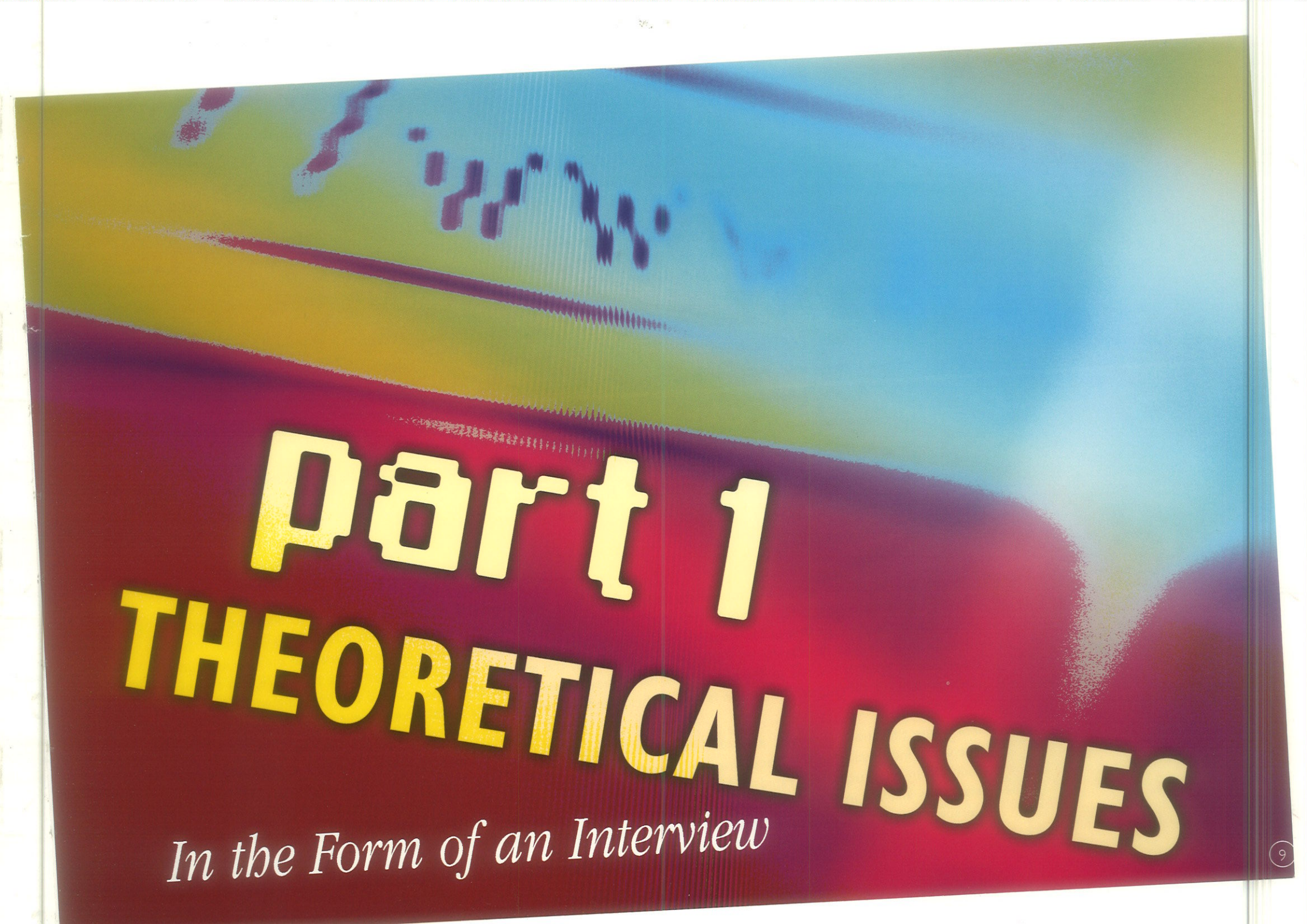
History is a core issue in Media Education because the way history is understood and represented through the Media influences our personal and social understandings and general outlook: that is, the way we understand our personal and social world. This is the reason why in the practical activities included in this first issue of *EICON* emphasis is placed on themes related to history.

With regard to the format, we have tried to avoid the usual format of a traditional periodical and to combine iconic concepts and texts with written texts. We hope that the reader finds the general layout interestingly different. In our attempt to communicate our ideas through exploring new ways and methods, it was decided that the basic theoretical issues we would like to present in this first issue of *EICON* be presented in a different form which helps the reader focus on the main ideas. Thus, the theoretical part is presented in the form of an interview between Armin Hottmann and two experts he selected: Chrysoula Kosmidou-Hardy and Robert Ferguson.

⁴ "Simera" is the Greek word for the word "today".

⁵ The photograph was taken after the International Conference held in Athens University. The title of the Conference was: In-formation in the Digital Communication Era: Towards M.E.A.C (Media Education Across the Curriculum).

⁶ In the second year, Ania Wach-Kakolewicz, Adam Mickiewicz University, Poland joined the project.



part 1

THEORETICAL ISSUES

In the Form of an Interview



Armin Hottmann

First of all let me just briefly introduce Chrysoula. Well, Dr **Chrysoula Kosmidou-Hardy** works at the Pedagogical Institute as a Consultant to the Greek Ministry of Education. Apart from developing a model of critical education, as well as a developmental model for Careers Education and Guidance, she has been involved in the field of Media Education and Communication for some years now through teaching at Athens University, organizing European projects and being involved in many international initiatives and events, conducting research, publishing a lot of material (articles and books) and producing relevant material. The most recent book she has edited is "**Quality and Evaluation in Education: a genuine dialogue for education**". She is the President of the Transnational, Interdisciplinary Society: **SY.N.TH.E.SI. The Heuristic Teachers' Society**.

So, Chrysoula, I want to start by exploring the four issues we consider to be of particular importance. These are:

- The way Media Education is defined,
- The way Media Education can be promoted across the curriculum,
- The relationship between theory and practice, and
- The role of history in Media Education.

Now then, can you please let us know what your views are about these four issues starting with the first one, that is:

what is Media Education?



Chrysoula Kosmidou-Hardy

Thanks Armin. Well, I would like to start by saying that Media Education may mean different things to different people, depending on their approach to and definition of education itself. So, to answer what Media Education is involves, *inter alia*, making clear, in the first place, what education itself is and for whom. If we study critical theories on the role and aim of education, as well as curriculum theories, we realize that the aim and role of education -and, therefore, the aim of curricula- is directly related to the holistic and harmonious development of the person and the development of her/his critical thinking. Of course, the person is a social being and thus the person's social development is one of the basic aims of education.

For some time now, however, education seems to have blurred its main orientation and to have focused instead on preparing individuals for the labour market according to the, usually, narrow demands of the economy in general and industry in particular. Yet, rapid technological changes followed by continuous transitions from known to unknown situations and life in *risk societies* have shown the necessity for an education which recognizes the importance of the person. For example, the Lisbon Strategy promotes "Investment in People and Knowledge".



The question is what kind of knowledge is needed particularly today. Taking into consideration today's context characterized by rapid changes and transitions, extreme instability and a high degree of unpredictability about what is ahead of us, we first of all need knowledge about ourselves: that is **self-knowledge**; knowledge about who we are or who we may be. We also need knowledge about the world in which we live and not just narrow information about fragmented subject matters. This means that, in a chaotic surrounding world, **self** and **social awareness** and development is what needs to be promoted through educational systems.

In any critical approach, education needs to be analyzed taking into consideration the historical context in which it functions and, in today's social context, we need to remember that our "New Era" is characterized as the "Information Era". The question is how we are informed today. We may be bombarded with information, but are we really informed? The media play a particularly important role in transmitting information to a large audience and, thus, Media Education has an important role to play.

In one sense, the media are about the world and it has been argued that they represent the world. However, representation is a highly political issue. First of all, in the context of privatization in particular, ownership of the media is an important matter. Who are those who represent the world? What are their values and interests? What kind of identities do they promote? For example, in women's studies, gender is a point which is analyzed and it is argued that those who usually represent the world are middle-class, white men. The implications for women through this kind of representation must be critically analyzed and discussed. In a critical approach to the media it is recognized that the media do not just represent the world but that they shape identities and the world through particular performances they create and/or promote. Today the media promote their messages, products and values through complicated performances in all kinds of genre: advertisements, soap operas, films, reality shows, news, etc.

Thus, performance and communication as performance constitute another important area in Media Studies and Media Education. In Communication and Cultural Studies it is considered that the most important element in communication is not the transmission and reception of messages but communication as performance. Performance refers to rituals and practices that a community uses in order to initiate its members into particular understandings of who they are, of what is right or wrong, ethical or unethical, true or false, to coordinate their behaviour and to promote a homogeneous way of interpreting the world.

Media Education is thus education about the media and their role in shaping identities, societies, democracy and the world.



Media Education is about the self and the world. It is education grounded on a sound philosophical base of an interdisciplinary character and on a critical methodology using its own "grammar", "syntax" and language drawing mainly from semiotics. It is an educational approach

which, particularly in the era of digital communication, the internet, the picture or the icon -eicon- and the photographic text, is of particular importance and its approach, or "grammar" and "syntax", can contribute to the development of a critical, cross-border pedagogy: that is a pedagogy which should be used for the teaching of all school subjects and not just for teaching the media. To conclude then with the answer to the question posed about "what Media Education is", I would like to say the following. According to research I carried out in Greece⁷, Media Education is a loosely construed term with emphasis given to the development of critical thinking. My approach is close to that of the UNESCO one which considers that Media Education includes the following characteristics⁸. Media Education:

- deals with all communication media including traditional printed texts and graphics, as well as the sound, still and moving images, created with the use of technology,
- promotes a deeper understanding of the communication media used in society and the way they function,
- encourages the critical deconstruction and analysis of the context within which media texts operate. More specifically, it promotes the critical analysis and identification of values and interests (social, cultural, political, economic and commercial) influencing the formation of media texts,
- encourages the development of the knowledge and skills required on the part of students and citizens at large for the critical reading of media texts,
- supports the development of critical -or alternative, as I name them- media texts.

⁷ Kosmidou-Hardy, (2002), "Iconic Communication Today and the Role of Media Education", in A. Hart and D. Suss (eds), *Media Education in European Countries: A Comparative Study of Teaching Media in Mother Tongue Education in Secondary Schools*. Zurich: E-Collection of the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Zurich.

⁸ Recommendations Addressed to the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization UNESCO. *In Education for the Media and the Digital Age*. Vienna: UNESCO, 1999, p.273-274.



I know how difficult it is to give short answers to complicated questions like the one you have just answered in a holistic and critical way. Let's proceed to the next point now, Chrysoula. What about the issue related to the role of Media Education across the curriculum?



If we analyze new trends in curriculum development, for example in the context of the Common European Framework of Reference (C.E.F.R.), we realize that a different approach to curricula is recognized; an approach which emphasizes the cross-curricular promotion of personal development, critical thinking and the development of personal and social skills. For instance, according to C.E.F.R., in the context of teaching a foreign language, personal development, self awareness (*or savoir être*), as well as "knowledge of the world", should be promoted.

In Greece, the Pedagogical Institute has developed new curricula for primary and secondary education and new school books (syllabi) have been written for all school subjects emphasizing the above priorities. A basic element of the new curricula is the approach to a theme in an interdisciplinary way: that is, across the curriculum, through different school subjects and analyzed from different perspectives. This is called an *interthematic* approach.

The recent educational reforms in curricula and syllabi in Greece need to be viewed in the context of the general attempts in the educational systems of Europe to prepare students for the new information societies characterized by rapid changes and subsequent transitions requiring new skills for facing risk and uncertainty. Taking into consideration the social role of education and, in particular, the link between education and production, changes in the socio-economic reality demand changes in the educational systems through *investing in people (or human capital) and in knowledge*. The present conditions at a European and global level require the holistically educated person and the development of critical thinking. It is not coincidental, therefore, that emphasis is given to *personal development* and the development of skills needed today through projects funded by Europe, assessment and evaluation programmes and educational reforms in general.

Facing **uncertainty** today requires individuals to develop qualities which conventional, traditional approaches to education do not provide. Uncertainty is a reality which we cannot escape and the two fundamental prerequisites for coping with insecurity, changes and transitions are *critical self and social awareness*. **Self awareness** is a process through which we can undertake a project of personal, lifelong development. The Delphic "**Know thyself**" could never be more important than what it seems to be today. Positioned in the middle of a changing world, it seems that the only steady or secure centre we can find in a de-centred and decentralizing social *milieu*, is a centre within ourselves. Knowing ourselves is not an easy enterprise but it seems to be one which can facilitate our journey through life choices and transitions.

uncertainty

Social awareness



Social awareness is very important as well, since we do not live in a social vacuum. This kind of awareness requires critical analysis of external, social reality which influences the construction of our identities but which we can also influence and shape through *informed choices* and *critical interventions* in the social web. In order to promote critical social awareness we need to learn how to critically read or deconstruct social reality and for such a purpose we need the use of a *holistic model* to communication practices, in the context of which a special kind of “alphabet” is needed and an important element of this “alphabet” is *semeiology*. The majority of today’s texts are electronic and iconic. For *iconic* texts to be critically read or deconstructed “receivers” of information and texts need to be supported through education in order to become *active and critical readers* who can read texts systematically and inter-textually, so that, equipped with the appropriate cognitive and communication skills, they can better understand reality and prepare dynamically for changes and transitions.

Yet, although the importance of the above aims is recognised at a European level, the methodology and strategies through which the theoretically recognized aims are implemented in practice seem to be still influenced by a rather conservative, linear curriculum model; a model closer to a behaviorist approach; a pedagogical model, that is, which is contradictory to the philosophy and aims theoretically expressed and is certainly not the best for promoting personal development and critical thinking.

One of the strong points of Media Education is that -when it is approached systematically and critically- it is based on a holistic, critical and interdisciplinary approach to learning and development and it can actually provide the foundation for self and social awareness and development. It also provides a methodology based on the “grammar” and “syntax” to which I referred earlier on. This methodology takes into consideration all kinds of texts -not just written ones- and especially iconic texts. It recognizes the historical and social context in which texts function, as well as the readers’ personal “contexts” which influence the way they understand and/or



read texts. Through its methodology, it promotes a critical, *radical* reading of texts, which is a priority for developing critical thinking, active citizenship, intercultural communication and personal / social development at large. Thus, Media Education as a philosophy and methodology needs to be promoted across the curriculum. What also needs to be promoted across the curriculum is the deconstruction of media texts and the analysis of media organization and functions.

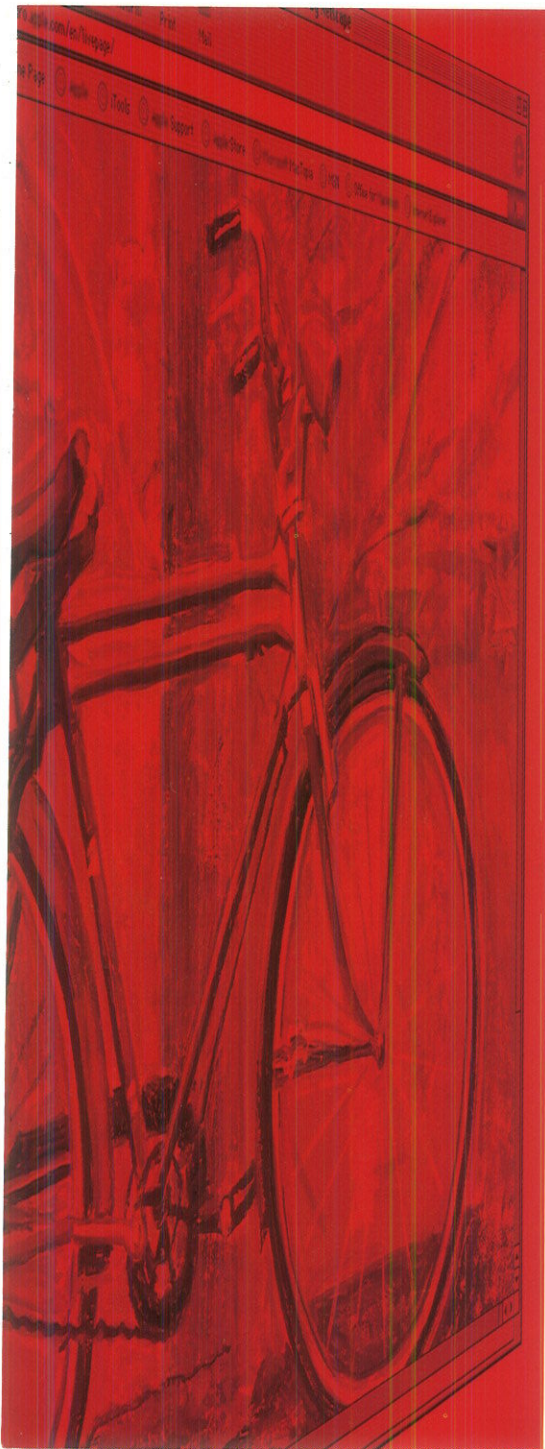
The media today play and will continue to play the role of a particularly “significant” other under whose influence identities are constructed through symbols, values, stereotypes and messages re-presented at a high speed and in a complex way. Recognition of the role of the media, and technology in general, requires specific ways of education so that we can become conscious of the way in which they influence us through the techniques, methods and “language” used for this purpose. In Greece, as well as in other countries, Media Education as a school subject is absent. I argue that, in the context of electronic and iconic communication, this subject should be a core subject in the curriculum of every educational system that supports personal development and the development of critical thinking.

The importance of this issue is such that it should also become a cross-curricular theme not just in the context of an *interthematic* approach to which I referred earlier on, but as a systematic strategy at a philosophical/theoretical level, as well as at the level of methodology to be used in other school subjects and by all educators. For such an aim I consider it necessary that Media Education should also be included in the curricula of tertiary education for *pre-* and *in-service* teachers at an undergraduate and postgraduate level⁹, which may be either integrated in the traditional disciplines or autonomous¹⁰. The pedagogy of today needs a different approach to teaching and learning; an approach that needs to take into consideration new developments at a socio-economic and cultural level and the developments in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in particular. Educators need to be equipped¹¹ with the knowledge that will facilitate their role today and that will help them to promote personal and social development across the curriculum.

⁹ It needs also to be incorporated in teacher training programmes and all educational centers.

¹⁰ For example, taught as a specialized module which is accredited.

¹¹ In organized courses and educational centers, as well as distance learning programmes and autonomous learning activities in the context of a lifelong process of learning and development.



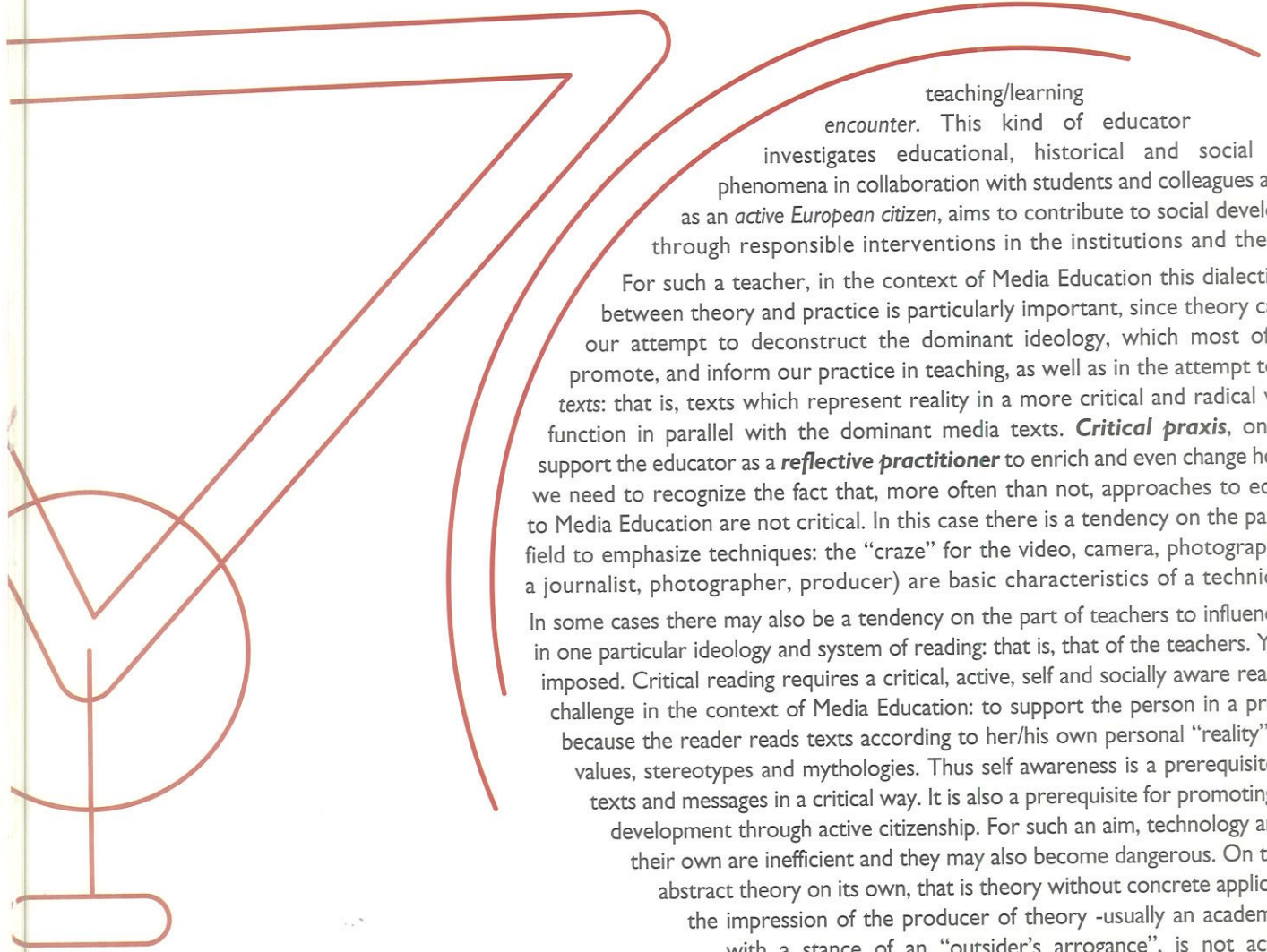
Well, let's move on to the third question now. What about the relationship between theory and practice?

The theory and practice *nexus* is an important theme in the context of a critical approach to education and, of course, to Media Education. What is usually the case is that teachers are excluded from the production of "formal" theory and are supposed to be involved only with the practicalities of the profession. Thus, in the framework of technocratic rationality, the passivity of educators is promoted along with **knowledge-power** relations. In this way, the role of the educator is seriously down graded.

This implies that what do not seem to be seriously taken into consideration are contemporary theses on the *dialectic relationship between theory and praxis* together with those on the *production of knowledge*. The usual case is that a division between the two is promoted: that is, academics and those in power positions are supposed to produce theory and teachers as practitioners are supposed to implement it. Academics' theories are named *formal*, whereas those of teachers' *informal, personal* knowledge or *personal theory*. A model of strategic upgrading of the teacher's role through the promotion of a *profile of the teacher as a professional*. For such an aim it is necessary for the teacher to recognize the dialectic relationship between theory and practice. This means that s/he needs to become conscious of her/his personal theory first of all, view it critically, enrich it and critically analyze the teaching praxis s/he is involved in so as to enrich and or differentiate both theory and teaching praxis.



In the framework of such a model the teacher of *praxis* is not limited to merely teaching her/his particular school subject considering *teaching as technology*, that puts emphasis just on techniques; s/he is the teacher who does not just transmit subject information based on a linear model of communication with the student in the role of a passive receiver of information and knowledge. This teacher of prudent praxis (*praxis with phronesis*, in the Aristotelian sense) rather considers teaching as *moral practice* and adopts a *holistic* model of education and communication. In this context s/he considers students as *critical readers* of texts, readers who negotiate knowledge and information with critical thought and actively participate in the



teaching/learning
encounter. This kind of educator
investigates educational, historical and social
phenomena in collaboration with students and colleagues and,
as an *active European citizen*, aims to contribute to social development
through responsible interventions in the institutions and their bonds.

For such a teacher, in the context of Media Education this dialectic relationship
between theory and practice is particularly important, since theory can support us in
our attempt to deconstruct the dominant ideology, which most of the media texts
promote, and inform our practice in teaching, as well as in the attempt to *produce alternative*
texts: that is, texts which represent reality in a more critical and radical way. These texts can
function in parallel with the dominant media texts. **Critical praxis**, on the other hand, can
support the educator as a **reflective practitioner** to enrich and even change her/his theory. However,
we need to recognize the fact that, more often than not, approaches to education and, therefore,
to Media Education are not critical. In this case there is a tendency on the part of practitioners in the
field to emphasize techniques: the “craze” for the video, camera, photography, even for the role (of
a journalist, photographer, producer) are basic characteristics of a technique-based approach.

In some cases there may also be a tendency on the part of teachers to influence students to read texts
in one particular ideology and system of reading: that is, that of the teachers. Yet, critical reading is not
imposed. Critical reading requires a critical, active, self and socially aware reader. And this is the real
challenge in the context of Media Education: to support the person in a process of *self awareness*
because the reader reads texts according to her/his own personal “reality”, according to her/his
values, stereotypes and mythologies. Thus self awareness is a prerequisite for deconstructing
texts and messages in a critical way. It is also a prerequisite for promoting social change and
development through active citizenship. For such an aim, technology and techniques on
their own are inefficient and they may also become dangerous. On the other hand,
abstract theory on its own, that is theory without concrete applications, gives
the impression of the producer of theory -usually an academic- who,
with a stance of an “outsider’s arrogance”, is not actively
involved in *praxis*. What is, therefore, needed is a
healthy “marriage” of the *why* with the
how of things; a marriage between
theory and praxis.



Final point then, Chrysoula,
what about your views on
Media Education and History?



Well, first of all, let us situate ourselves historically in today's broader historical context. In today's world, characterized by acceleration of life-rhythms and time-space compression, mainly due to the rapid changes in technology, everything and everybody seems to be compressed: identities, geographical and cultural boundaries, history itself. The values of a dominant culture and history dominate the world and are promoted through politics, economic activities, language, as well as through the cinema and the media. There is little reference, if any, to the cultural differences and the historical past of the peoples who are gradually being compressed and homogenized into a pitiful sameness by adopting other values, habits and customs through the consumption of news and multinational products: Coca cola, MacDonald's, "United" -colourless?- Colours of Benetton, IBM, Shell and Goodies, are just a few examples of labels -trade-marks?- and signs which mark people and identify them as entities belonging to the 'civilized' world. Now, some questions which are historically important could be the following:

- **What is the "civilized" world?**
- **What is its mythology and history?**
- **What does it consist of?**
- **What is the civilization of smaller countries and peoples that are not economically powerful?**
- **How does one define a "developed" country and why has this definition dominated the world? Who accepts it? Who rejects it? Who opposes it?**
- **What is the historical background of those who promote globalization and what is their motive in doing so?**

→ The above are indicative questions which should be formulated and discussed when analyzing texts critically. Personalities, identities, events and activities do not exist in a historical vacuum. They are created and developed in particular historical, political and socioeconomic contexts under the influence of factors which can be located, critically deconstructed and discussed so that our understanding of them can be complete. It is not coincidental, in my view, that, at the same time when a dominant culture is promoted in the context of globalization, people are not encouraged to remember events, the past, history. On the contrary, a dominant memory is promoted as well about how we should remember the past. Should we really “delete” events and memories from our lives and the past in general as suggested in American scenarios of science fiction plots as, for example, in the film “The Eternal Sunshine of a Spotless Mind”? How far from the reality constructed and promoted are such scenarios?

And yet, is it possible to escape from the past? Is it possible to escape history? My view is that, whatever you may do and/or invent in your attempt to escape history, you will fail. **History will foil you in your attempt to escape it.**

Let us not forget that Media Education has as an important aim reading texts critically. Critical reading, among other things, requires us to take into consideration the historical and social context within which texts are produced and function. This means that we need to trace the historical evolution of a phenomenon and locate the reasons and factors which led to its creation. For example, up to today, we construe hysteria as a clearly female ‘disease’. However, if we study the birth of the illness historically we will realize that it was developed in antiquity invented in the context of the dominance of patriarchal ideology. Centuries later we realize that it was in the 19th century that hysteria was reinvented in the famous clinic of the psychoanalyst Charcot who has been criticized for presenting hysteria as a female malady and, of course, a whole discourse was also developed followed by the development of material and discursive practices. The question then whether it is coincidental that hysteria was reinvented in the 19th century in western Europe with the specific values dominating at the time is rhetorical. Certainly it was not coincidental that I selected this as a theme of my workshop in the International Conference held in Athens University in 2004, which we organized as a main activity of the M.E.A.C. project. The title of my workshop then “*The history of hysteria or the hysteria of history?*”, was not coincidental either.

Therefore, we need to analyze how something was created, under the influence of which factors and interests and how years later we come to see it as “natural” or “true” because it is “scientific”, because we don’t understand it, because we don’t analyze it historically. You cannot argue that you read a text critically if you don’t link it with its history and its historical context.





Painting by Katerina Lazaki



We need to remember that a basic aim in Media Education is promoting critical self and social awareness and that, in any critical approach to the personal and the social, the role of history is important. The Delphic “know thyself” and self awareness implies exploring, first of all, **what self there is to know**. This means that our past needs to be critically “re-visited”, accepted and seen in a different perspective, which is a prerequisite for a serious approach to personal development. Our cultural, social, national history, its influence on the construction of our identity and the way we understand reality and the world also needs to be analyzed and read critically. A critical approach to Media Education needs to promote an attitude or a movement from personal and social and, in general, historical “amnesia” towards critical self and social awareness. The issue of history and how it is constructed by those who have access to promoting their understandings of and their “truths” about the world as “formal” theories, knowledge and discourses is necessary for such a movement.

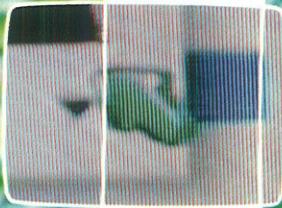
The role of memory is another important issue linked with history, as well as with self and social awareness because on a journey towards critical self awareness, *the subject learns to avoid “mortgaging” the present through a negative repression of the past or through an escape into the future*. Memory is a fundamental element in construing and analyzing what is present, past and future. However, personal (or popular, according to Michel Foucault’s term) memory is oppressed, or even attempted to be eliminated and “reprogrammed” through the promotion of a dominant memory which the media, as well as institutions of cultural heritage, promote.

Thus, if we want to analyze the past, if we want to examine texts in their historical context, if we want to remember history, we need to wake up from the lethargy of consumerism and technocratic rationality which do not facilitate in-depth analysis of things and events. We need to **energize memory** and the practical activity included in the second part of this periodical works towards this aim. Therefore, history and media education are absolutely linked and the educator who bases his or her approach on a critical model of education gives priority to the issue of historicity. This is, of course, a responsibility of all educationalists whose teaching praxis is based on a critical model of Education and a cross-border pedagogy; a pedagogy which is common across the curriculum. Media educators perhaps need to take the initiative to promote collaboration with colleagues of other school subjects and encourage them to adopt a critical model and include media texts in their subject in the context of a *cross-border* pedagogy which takes into consideration the social, historical world where teaching and the school itself are situated.

In conclusion then, I would like to suggest that the recognition of Media Education, both as a separate subject, as well as a theme to be promoted across the curriculum, is necessary for the following reasons:

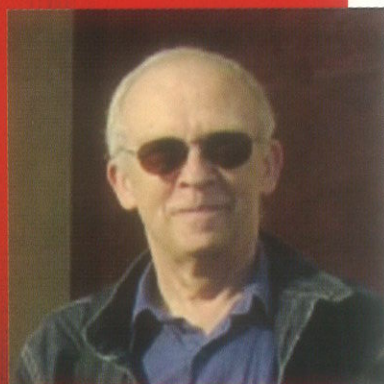
- 1) The high degree of media consumption combined with the general ideology of consuming in today's societies.
- 2) The ideological function of the media, their role as "conscience industries" and their powerful influence on the construction of identity and the world.
- 3) The increase, through technology, in the construction and management of information and dissemination through the media.
- 4) The increasing involvement of the media in decision and policy-making centres and processes of democracy.
- 5) The increasing importance of optical/visual communication and information.
- 6) The increasing national and international pressures for privatization in general and the privatization of information channels in particular.
- 7) The importance, therefore, for educating students, teachers and citizens at large through a new "alphabet" and "grammar" of the image or the icon, so that they can develop their critical autonomy and become more responsible and active citizens; become citizens who are not influenced by media messages and, as Umberto Eco said in the past, they can say instead:

**"Not your will,
but my will
be done"**





Armin Hottmann



Robert Ferguson

Fine. Let me turn now to Robert Ferguson. Robert Ferguson works in the Institute of Education of the University of London where he teaches about media and cultural studies. He has been involved in cultural studies and Media Education for quite a few years now as well as in many international initiatives and events. His most recent book is "The Media in Question".

*Well, Bob, your views now on **what Media Education is.***

I'd like to start by saying something about Media Education and what it might be and what it isn't. First of all let me be very positive and say what I think Media Education is. Media education is a kind of an engagement with the world in which we live. Once we used to say that education was that, and perhaps sometimes education still is, but media education is unavoidably about the world in which we live because it is about the mass media and they constantly represent to us the world in which we live. Now we could either say that we should not look - this is the negative appraisal of media education- that we should ignore the media. Or we can say that we should make sure that the evils of the media are not going to have a full impact upon the young or we can do something which is much more educationally sound which is that we can engage with the media. And engaging with the media means a constant reference to the ways in which different media in different ways represent different issues to us as school students, as teachers, as citizens.

The study of media is not something that necessarily involves the taking of examinations, although it may. It is something which is about the world which the media represent. So if you study the media you study the world. If you study the media you study your social existence and the social existence of others. You don't just study film and television or radio and newspapers or even the internet. They all relate to the way people live and it is my opinion that the importance of media education is because it is about studying the way people live. Having said that it also happens to be very enjoyable and I would suggest that there are serious responsibilities about studying the media because there are serious issues which are raised by the media but there are also many issues which are pleasurable and should be, which are about the nature of pleasure, the nature of productivity and creativity. Which, when you think about it, is what life is about it, I guess. And that is why media education is so important and it is part of all our lives, in one way or another. The advantage of it becoming part of education is that it is formalised, recognised and very productive.



*And what about your views
on the role of Media Education
across the curriculum?*



I have said something about Media Education but what about the idea of Media Education across the curriculum? First of all some teachers would say "I am a history teacher", "I am a geography teacher", "I am a mathematics teacher" - "I don't need to talk about the media, I have got a subject to teach and I need to get on with it". I am afraid we live in a world where that isn't quite so easy now or, indeed, whether it is even productive or desirable. I am not sure because media don't just represent things like tele-novellas, soap-operas, dramas, the news: the media represent science, they represent geography, they show us the world, they show us its structures, they talk about mathematics, one way or another, and there is no way that we can seriously talk about the world if we are talking about any applied field at all without reference to media representations. History is a classic example now because we live in an era where, with digitisation from now on, data, evidence, the kind of material that will be looked up in future as part of history is all recorded in sound, in vision: it is computerised.

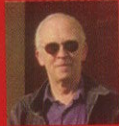
The future historians will have to be media educators. They will have to be media literate, they will have to be media competent because that's where their data will reside. They can't say "I don't know whether I want to bother with it" - it will be the source of their history. At the same time we also have many many representations of history as well as history books. We have many other representations of history from everything: from comic books to feature films

to documentaries which purport to tell us something much nearer to a truth all of which need to be studied as representations if we are going to understand history. In order to do that we would need to know about film, television, digitised imagery, editing - all kind of issues which we associate at the moment with media education. I have chosen history as a single example, but geography would be just the same.

The way in which the world is represented in geography has been of great significance in the world of text books, the ones we can remember from school where we saw different parts of the world, usually in a representative picture - a single image very often. Now we are more likely to see DVD images, moving images but the kind of images chosen, the way they are put together always need to be studied, questioned, analysed. What we are doing in media education is what the best education has always done in history, in other subjects, in the humanities, which is to study, to question, to doubt, to confirm but constantly to engage with the way in which the world is represented and to engage in the way with our skills are in fact imparted to us. How teachers work with us, how we learn each day more in different subjects all of which is now and always represented in relation to the media one way or another. Remember that we sit in rooms now usually full of computers, with digital cameras around the edges of the room, sometimes with video cameras watching us while we are learning. We need to engage with all of that. We have to develop pedagogies, strategies for learning and teaching - that's why media education across the curriculum is not something we should desire, it is something we should recognise. It is here and it won't go away. →



Now what about the relationship between theory and practice?



I will try and say a word or two about theory and practice. One of the issues which has always been of interest to me and grows in interest as years go by is why in education theory and practice are always seen as two separate things.

You either are a practitioner or a theorist. Presumably a practitioner is a person with hands on experience who just knows how to do things. And presumably, by that definition, a theorist is someone who doesn't have to soil their hands with anything but just knows about things. And they only meet when they talk. They can't have any other form of contact. Now this would be funny if it wasn't for the fact that it is actually quite a realistic definition it seems to me that goes on still in education. I want to argue quite differently. I want to suggest, especially from the point of view of media education, that theory and practice are indeed part of the same activity, that you can't do one without the other if you are doing it properly. And I don't think this is clever play on words. I think it is actually working towards a very clear definition. The fact is that to practise in the media, to represent the world, to construct media messages, you always theorise about the world, whether you do it consciously or not. You do it because you have an idea of what constitutes good television or what constitutes a well framed shot, or what a good interview is, or what a proper documentary would be, or how realism should be shot. Any time you engage with any of those issues you are engaging with theory whether you think you are or not.

Now, equally, if you think you are a theorist and you think you can have ideas about the way the world is represented and stand outside that representation you can't. Of course, it is possible to theorise and insist that you will not come near anyone who is doing anything, but if you go public on that I don't think you win too many friends. The point is that if you are going to do a serious activity, an educational activity like media education, you need to produce, to think about, to analyse, you need to think that your theory is going to inform your practice and your practice is going to inform your theory. There is no way in media education of keeping them apart which isn't damaging to both of them. So theory and practice have to be re-conceptualised as one activity. It is the theory and practice of media education and next week it will be the practice and the theory.



Finally, Bob, what are your views on Media Education and History?



I'd just like to talk a bit more about history and history's relationship to media education. The first point I think which really needs to be emphasised is that there are enormous similarities between the approach to media education and approaches to history. And history of course is much older than media education and has the right to claim to having been there first. And it has, it is. But why I think it is important is that history has a discipline associated with it called historiography. Historiography is the study of the way in which history gets written. Who writes it from which viewpoint with what in mind, whose interests it serves –if it serves any interests–, which kind of approach to the concept of truth it embraces if it does. All of this is significant and very important both in history and in the use of media.

This is particularly true when media histories come along in the form of documentaries, or current affairs programmes, or any kind of representation of the past. And the past is actually only 24 frames ago. It certainly becomes the past very quickly in media terms. If we wish to study history and study the way history is made, then there is no better way than to try to make one ourselves. However modest that history is, it is possible to take a series of images and some information about those images and decide how to put them together in order to tell, to construct, to narrate a specific and particular history. So if you were given, for instance, or collected, let's say, twenty images which you may take yourself, may get from books, take from the internet, wherever, if they are all around a common theme it would be possible to use them to construct a particular history.

The only suggestion I would make is that if you collect images at any point, you should always know where that image came from, who the image is of, something about that person, where they live. The reason I say that is not that this has implications for what might be called good history but also because, ironically, in

the age of the media when we think that we are all so free and our identities are so free, we are very often represented anonymously, we are just another image in the bank of images and there are millions of images of millions and millions of people. And in the end they don't mean anything; they are just another one of the millions of people. In fact, of course, everyone has an identity –a name, a past and hopefully a future. And if you are going to write a history about them which involves them or even if they are no longer living, if you are going to write a history about them, you need to know who they are or who they were.

This is a good educational discipline. It means you have then got to use that data as well as the image you collect. You have to use that data with the image and put it together in some kind of structure which usually means you are going to have a commentary or some kind of narrative form. Now those three things –image, data, commentary– together mean you construct your media history. When it is a moving image history with music, titles, sound of all kinds, the complications of full movie making enter into it. Whether it is simple or complex, however, at least those three ingredients are there –images, data and then your commentary or your construction of the history. To undertake that task is very valuable. It is valuable for a teacher, it is even more valuable for a student or a pupil because they learn how one can construct a history and indeed how from the same data one can construct more than one history which is extremely important in understanding especially the contemporary world. Therefore, I suggest to you that this is a possibility for history teachers which should be followed up.



Chrysoula Kosmidou-Hardy and Robert Ferguson thank you both very much. I hope we have presented some very interesting points. Of course, all this will be evaluated by the reader and it is her/his choice and responsibility to decide what s/he agrees and disagrees with and what s/he will find useful for reflection and for practice. Let us move on to the practical activities and see how these are informed with the theoretical issues and how, in turn, these activities may help us understand theory better.

PART 2

PRACTICAL ACTIVITIES

by Chrysoula Kosmidou - Hardy

Part II of the periodical includes suggested practical activities. The two practical activities offer the opportunity for analysis and discussion of important themes related to Media Education, as well as to education in general. They also offer the opportunity for practicing skills on the critical reading of texts.

The first practical activity consists of two parts. In the first part media practitioners and educators in general are invited to analyze and discuss Media Education and other educational issues. For example, suggested issues to be discussed are: a critical model of education, the educator's own personal theory and its relationship with practice, the importance of educators' self and social awareness as well as that of the readers', the historical context of texts and issues of representation. The target audience of the second part are students and/or trainees who are offered basic stimuli, presented through questions and paintings -accompanied by a PowerPoint presentation as support material- for practicing their knowledge and skills in deconstructing iconic texts, as well as for becoming more critical in their approach to analyzing texts of different kinds.

The second practical activity also consists of two parts. Part one offers the opportunity for deconstructing iconic texts included in a PowerPoint presentation. The iconic texts accompany questions most of which are included in a questionnaire which students/trainees are asked to fill in before the PowerPoint presentation. Through the stimulus of the questions, participants are invited to discuss issues related to Media Education. Two important areas of the questionnaire, which has memory as its main theme, are: the personal text of the reader of texts, as well as the social and historical context where texts are situated. Part two of the second practical activity offers video texts -in iconic and traditional, written form- to be critically read and discussed. The teacher/trainer can choose to lead a discussion on the video on the themes s/he finds more interesting for her/his audience. However, the suggested questions included in the second part of the questionnaire mentioned above may be helpful for critical analysis of important educational issues and for discussion.

The methodology and material included in both practical activities are mere suggestions and stimuli for analyzing and discussing important themes related to Media Education and education. The teacher / educator is free, of course, to use the material in her/his creative way according to the participants' level and needs, as well as according to the aims and educational priorities of the educator/trainer her/himself.

Each practical activity emphasizes specific points related to Media Education in particular and education in general. However, both of them intend to promote critical thinking through the critical reading of texts. Thus, below follows an introduction to both activities linked with the issue of critical reading.

Critical reading is a central issue in Media Education. It is also an important step towards the development of critical thinking. Critical reading, however, requires the reader of a text to know the “grammar” and “syntax” necessary for the analysis or “deconstruction” of a text.

In the era of electronic, digital communication a text which is of particular importance is the “iconic” text: that is, the picture. The picture -or *eicon*- is not just a representation of reality. It is rather constructed in different ways. Therefore, the picture is *political* and, thus, careful analysis of any iconic text and its signification is necessary. Roland Barthes was the first to refer to two *orders of signification* which are important stages for the analysis of a text. These orders are *denotation* and *connotation*.

Denotation describes the relationship between the actual form (written, photographic, etc.) of a message or sign (what is called the *signifier*) and the mental concept formed through the sign (or what is called the *signified*) in our attempt to divide reality up and categorize it so that we can understand it. Denotation refers to the commonsense, obvious meaning of the sign. At the denotation level what is needed is careful observation of a text -particularly of the iconic one- and its detailed description: what can be seen, what the colours are, where each person or object is positioned (i.e. centre, corner, front, back of the picture), who is “speaking”, what kind of language (written or oral) is used, what is omitted (what the presences and absences are) etc.

Connotation describes the interaction that takes place when the sign meets the feelings of the user and the values of his or her culture. This means that meanings move towards the subjective or intersubjective sphere. At the connotation level, then, the analysis needs to take into consideration feelings and thoughts. The message, which the text is trying to convey, is associated with other stories, memories, feelings and myths; that is, stories by which a culture explains or understands some aspect or reality or nature: for example, existing myths about what is right and wrong, normal or abnormal, etc. Myths are important because through them the dominant ideology invades our understandings, imposes particular discourses presented as “scientific” and “true” and thus our perception of reality is influenced and limited.

Critical reading needs to start with the denotation level and proceed with the connotation level so that we can decode or deconstruct a message systematically.

Parkin (1972) has argued that there are three basic meaning systems by which the persons interpret or respond to their perception of their position or situation in society. Hall (1973) suggests that these systems correspond to ways of deconstructing or decoding mass media messages. These systems are:

- The *dominant system* (or code), which is consistent with the dominant ideology and conveys the values or *preferred readings* of the society. Thus, this system does not question the *status quo*.
- The *subordinate system*, which accepts the dominant values and existing structure of a society but is prepared to make some compromises in favour of those who are perhaps being used or oppressed by the dominant ideology.
- The *radical system*, which Hall (*ibid*) calls *oppositional*. This system or reading rejects the dominant version and the social values that are produced by it. *Critical reading* is *radical* and *oppositional* to the dominant ideology. The *oppositional* reader becomes aware of the reading the writer of a message or text wants to promote (a message consistent with the dominant ideology), but opposes it, rejects it as false and produces her or his meaning. S/he is also in a position to analyze the reasons why the writer intends to promote a specific kind of reading: a *preferred reading*.

Some basic characteristics of critical reading are the following:

- It takes into consideration the context in the framework of which texts and messages function: the historical and social, or external, context, as well as the personal, or internal, context. With regard to the social context we need to recognize the fact that we read texts in relation to what we learn through other social contexts (e.g. at home, at work, at school, at church, in the family, etc.). We also need to recognize the fact that we read texts according to our *personal texts*, that is according to who we are. Our stereotypes, perceptions and values influence our way of seeing things and, thus, the way/s we interpret reality and the world.
- It analyses the ideology which is hidden behind texts and the values which it promotes.
- It takes into consideration the cultural and historical context which shapes events and understandings.

The practical activities which follow intend to promote critical reading with the qualities mentioned above.

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PRACTICAL ACTIVITY I

Deconstructing the self and the world through performance

intro duction

This practical activity consists of two parts. Part B is material intended for work with students and trainees. Part A. is intended for teachers and educators in general. Part A. starts with an extract from a paper¹² presented at an international conference held in Poznan University, Poland. This extract is the introduction of the paper presented at the conference in the form of a dialogical *performance*¹³ between the author and a school teacher, because, according to communication and cultural studies, the most basic element in communication is *performance*. Through performance we communicate and we learn both: who we are and who the *others* are. Performance relates to the way that we behave and the roles we play often presenting an external reality of a self *as an object in order to become a subject* (Diamond 1996, p.8)¹⁴.

The above implies that, through living in particular communities where the patriarchal ideology is dominant and influenced by rituals as well as by material and discursive practices, we learn to perform multiple roles consistent with this ideology in routine practices and events which take place at different social contexts. Performance practices usually support the conservation of culture not merely through the transmission of cognitive messages and information but mainly through influencing individuals to understand experience in concrete ways and readings which are *preferred* by the dominant cultural community. This is achieved in a more effective way through influencing the person to feel emotionally involved with the social world and not just through coming to know it¹⁵.

Thus, it is clear that critical reading presupposes self and social awareness: that is awareness of who we are and of the way in which our identity formation has been influenced by factors such as culture, history and the broader social context. Since performance is an important element in communication, in a process of developing critical self and social awareness it is important that, as media educators, and as critical educators at large:

- we try to learn more about ourselves through becoming conscious of and analyzing our own performances,
- we try to experiment with performance as a method of teaching, learning and development at a personal and social level, and
- we discuss ways of developing innovative communication practices (through the reinvention of symbols and forms), which can serve to structure new performances, new roles, and, ultimately, new institutions.

The dialogue between the two educationalists which follows is an attempt to use the method of communication as performance. The painting by Achilleas -and the reproduction of parts of the painting- is another example of developing texts through which the message is presented in the form of *performance*.

¹² Kosmidou-Hardy, 2006a.

¹³ More analytically presented in Kosmidou-Hardy, 2006b.

¹⁴ See also Apter, 1996.

¹⁵ This method is often used by the media and advertising.

intro duction

Some main themes in the dialogue which are useful for discussion are the following:

1. A critical model of education

Below, basic parameters of this model, are briefly presented.

A Critical Model of Education



According to the critical model of education we have developed¹⁶:

- The teacher as a professional needs to recognize the *dialectic relationship between theory and praxis*. This means that s/he needs to become conscious of her/his personal theory, look at it critically and enrich it in an interdisciplinary way. It also means that s/he critically analyzes the educational praxis in which s/he is involved with the attempt to enrich and revise the teaching practice through critical and responsible interventions. In the dialogue it is not coincidental that the educator who is involved with the practice of Media Education is a teacher of secondary education, who is not interested in theoretical issues, whereas the one who asks questions and suggests theoretical matters is an academic. "Is that what the usual case is?", is an interesting question. If so, what needs to be done in order to change the situation? This point in particular needs detailed deconstruction and discussion by interested educationalists.

- S/he needs to become conscious of her/his view concerning the *individual - society nexus*, analyze it critically and promote a dialectical relationship between the two. In this way s/he can recognize that, on the one hand, individuals are defined by the influence of external, social factors. On the other hand, however, what s/he can also recognize is the fact that they have the possibility to influence the construction of the social *milieu* through responsible interventions, when they are in a process of critical *self and social awareness*.
- The teacher as a professional also needs to use *experiential learning* critically (Kosmidou and Usher, 1992) and avoid *ex cathedra* teaching, that is just transmitting information. The careful and critical use of experiential learning can contribute to the promotion of personal development and a person / learner centred approach to teaching, a basic aim of which is the person's empowerment and the personal development of students who can experience a situation consciously, be actively involved in it and analyze it critically in the safe environment of the school classroom.
- The teacher needs to follow an *interdisciplinary approach* to teaching.

2. A Cross-border Pedagogy

Media Education as critical education can be promoted across the curriculum as a "cross-border" pedagogy and not be confined on the border of the school curriculum or within the limits of a "frozen syllabus" (Spriggs, 1972, in Kosmidou-Hardy, 2006a).

3. The educator's identity

The educator's identity, as well as the issue of *Media Education across* the curriculum, is a theme which needs discussion. Self awareness and personal development, as well as social awareness, can be promoted more successfully if they are adopted as important aims by self and socially aware, responsible educationalists teaching all school subjects and working at all levels of education. Plato, in the allegory which is included in the dialogue, refers to "strange prisoners". Perhaps, for "prisoners" of our new times to break their chains and bonds and be guided towards the "light" where they can see and understand the essence of things and the hidden messages

of the media, new teachers like Socrates are needed: teachers who are themselves characterized by *self and social awareness*; teachers who can go beyond the technicalities, beyond the "grammar" and "syntax" of Media Education and other subject matter technology; teachers who can support students and citizens at large to understand their stereotypes, attitudes and values, to learn to know themselves better and to read critically what is going on in the world of the media, as well as in the surrounding and globalizing world. Such teachers, as active citizens and not as passive spectators of "shadowy" performances and representations which others ("big brothers"?) manufacture and transmit, can promote an emancipating education based on a "cross-border pedagogy" and leading to a "journey upwards" as Socrates suggests in Plato's *Republic*.

4. The personal text of the reader

As mentioned in the introduction of Part II, the deconstruction of a text is influenced by the "text" of the reader's personality and identity. Yet, this is not a conscious process and, therefore, critical reading needs to take into consideration who the reader is and what the level of her/his self awareness is.

5. The historical context

The historical context in which a text is situated. Texts are produced and function in particular historical eras. It is important, when reading a text critically, to be aware of its historical context and to analyze the factors which led to the production of the particular text. For example, in Plato's allegory, which is included in the dialogue, we can see that the issue of representation is a rather old story. Some basic questions then that can be raised are related to the identity of those who represented the world during that time, what their interests were and how the issue of representation in the past and the present can be compared.

6. Representation

Representation is, of course, a theme which is emphasized in the dialogue. Through Socrates' allegory, accompanied by Achilleas's painting, representation can be discussed in more detail.

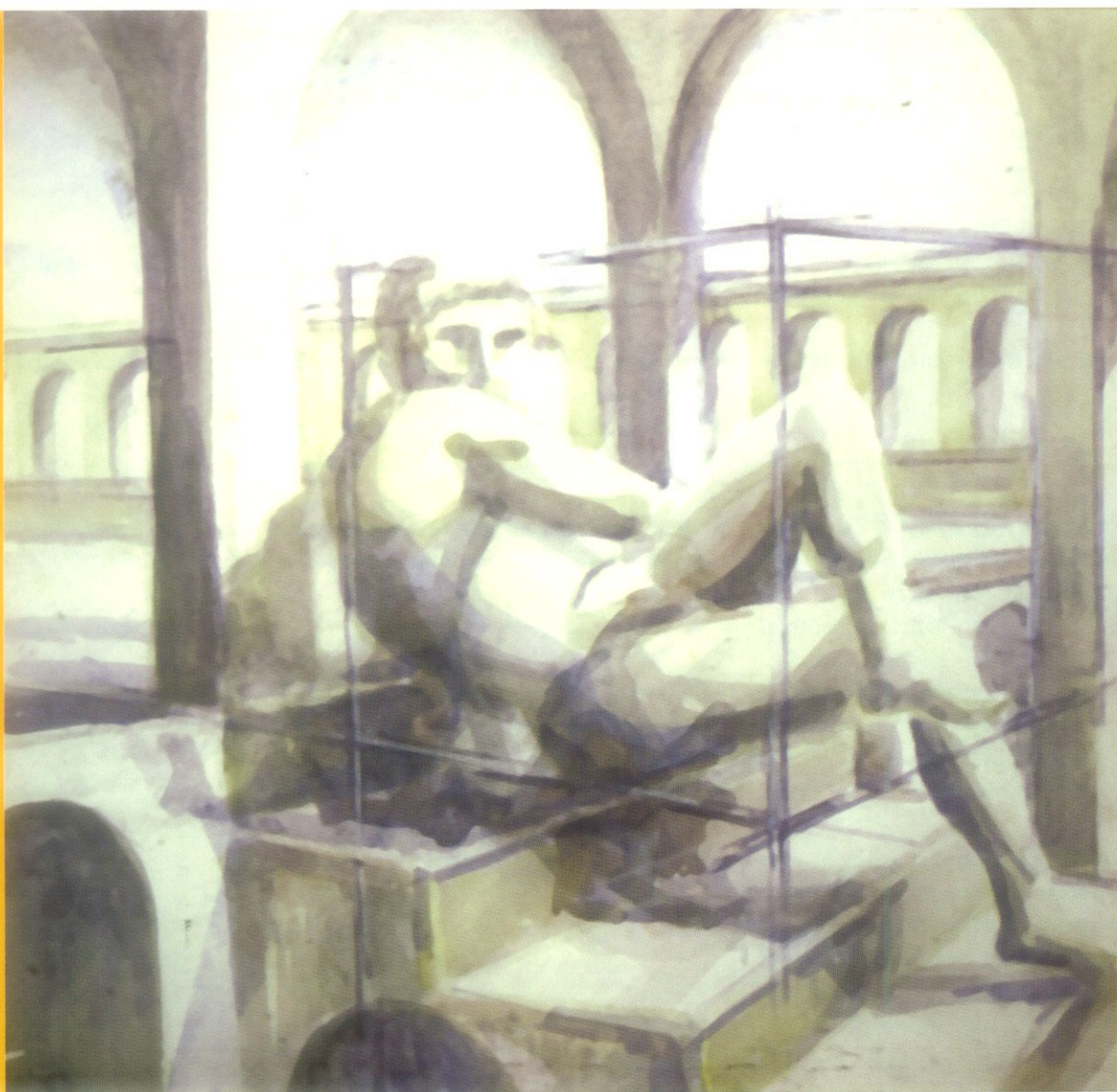
Socrates: ... the prison-house is the world of sight, the light of the fire is the sun, and you will not misapprehend me if you interpret the journey upwards to be the ascent of the soul into the intellectual world according to my poor belief, which, at your desire, I have expressed, whether rightly or wrongly God knows. (Plato, the Republic).

Aims and objectives

The broader aim of this practical activity is to highlight the importance of self awareness and critical thinking when reading personal and social texts critically, as well as the responsibility of educationalists to promote these aims through all school subjects.

Some more specific and indicative objectives of the activity are the following:

- To work as a stimulus for discussion of important educational issues between and amongst Media Education practitioners and educators in general,
- To increase educators' professional awareness,
- To encourage educators to critically read and become aware of their theory and aims in teaching M.E.: both their *personal theory* as well as the *formal theory* they may have adopted,
- To emphasize the importance of the theory / practice dialectic relationship,
- To support students and/or trainees become conscious of issues related to media representation and, in particular, to media ownership and its consequences,
- To promote the critical reading of texts,
- To encourage reading texts in their historical context within which they are produced and function,
- To familiarize practitioners in the field of M.E. with the approach of *performance*,
- To encourage teachers adopt a critical model of education on which Media Education needs to be based,
- To promote a "cross-border" pedagogy based on the collaboration of educators, and
- To promote teaching M.E. across the curriculum.



Painting by Teun Velders

Part A • Target audience: Educators

Media Education as Critical Education across the Curriculum: Towards a Cross-border Pedagogy?¹⁷

Educator 1

Educator 2¹⁸

Hello, I heard you are teaching Media Education in Secondary Schools. Is that right?

Hi, that's right! And you are a Consultant at the Hellenic Pedagogical Institute, if I am not mistaken?

Yes, that's right too. Could you tell me, please, what it is that you do when teaching Media Education?

I teach students how to use the camera and the video, to analyze TV ads, soap operas, news, etc.

I wonder what your aims are when you teach this subject.

Well, first of all, my main aim is to teach students how to read TV and media texts critically and thus not to be influenced by the media. Then, I must admit, I myself like to use technology and do something different. Finally, I think that, as a Media Education practitioner, I protect others.

You protect others? Well, has it occurred to you that you might like to be part of the media-heroes, the media mythology and, because you are not in a position to be a "hero", you have perhaps undertaken the role of an "anti-hero" who now wants to "protect" others?

Listen! Don't 'psychologize' things, please! I am not a psychologist! I am just a media practitioner. I only deal with the media.

Of course you are not a psychologist! But, as a teacher, are you not interested in who the students are as persons, as selves, as identities? Aren't you interested in who they think they are, what their values and perceptions are and how all this shapes the way they look at the world, at reality, at media texts?

I help them analyze values in general, but I wouldn't say that I have been interested in the students as personalities. And why should I be interested in an issue like this anyway?

Well, first of all, because you are an educator. Education, in a way, means "formation"¹⁹. Formation of persons; of human subjects and not of objects which are there to be filled with subject matter as information! In-formation, after all, is important because it forms individuals, realities and the world. Second, I think that you should be interested because you are supposed to promote critical reading of texts through Media Education.

Yes, of texts, not of selves!

¹⁷ Source: Kosmidou-Hardy, 2006a.

¹⁸ The dialogue was initially performed by C. Kosmidou-Hardy in the role of Educator 1 and T. Asvestas as Educator 2.

¹⁹ Education (latin: e-ducere): leading out or drawing out the latent powers of an individual. Cassel Encyclopaedic Dictionary - 1904 - vol. III Also, Educare: "to raise", "to bring up", "to train", "to rear".

But the person *is* a text: a complicated text. So I think that you need to support students first to deconstruct their own personal texts; the texts of their self-concepts which influence perception, ways of seeing and ways of reading other texts or messages with which they interact.

Of course! So the reader of texts interacts with the text and is not just a passive receiver. On the contrary, s/he accepts or rejects meanings according to her/his self-concept and according to the values s/he has acquired through culture: values about what is true or false, right or wrong, normal or abnormal, ethical or unethical, beautiful or ugly.

Certainly! Don't forget that Socrates was an educator. A real educator! Not a technician and not just a sophist who wanted to impress those who did not have his knowledge. He wanted, instead, to lead students find the knowledge, or the "light", they had inside themselves. Self-knowledge was what people had to discover; self-awareness they had to acquire.

Listen! First of all, practical things *do* require theory because theory and practice are dialectically related. The successful and responsible teacher -at all levels of education- knows this and tries to do it. But it's better if we are not entrapped in the logic of ease. After all, I think that what seems to be easy finally blocks our road to understand things in any deeper sense. Ease perpetuates the problem, because it focuses on the shiny surface and fails to reach the core. It deals with just the tree and misses the forest. It emphasizes the part and misses the whole. Yet, in this way, the easy, in the end, becomes hard, because it doesn't do away with the problem. It self-limits us.

One life to live! A key-phrase! That's exactly why I'm suggesting the promotion of self-awareness through education.

Oh! Is that why they say that communication is a social interaction through messages?

You mean that s/he reads texts actively according to who s/he is and, therefore, that we need to help students know themselves so that they can better understand the world of images transmitted through the media? You mean then that what Socrates said, that is the well-known "know thyself", should be promoted through education by media educators or, even, by all educators across the curriculum perhaps?

But, isn't this something very difficult? Self-awareness, light, -enlightenment?-critical thinking! Do you know how much work all that means? What are you suggesting to me? Aren't you perhaps an arrogant theorist who thinks that things in practice are so easy? After all, practical things don't require theory and this is proved by teachers of Higher Education who are often "lost" in their hazy world; they just theoretically teach their students in an abstract -if not confused and confusing- way and then they require students to make practice of what they say but don't do! Leave me alone please. You and your theories!

Oh, O.K. but I don't think I can cope with difficult things. After all, I feel tired! The 'digging' is deep and I've only got one life to live.

But other teachers, colleagues, just teach the subject matter too. How can I do all this on my own? I'm so alone!

First of all, I am not implying that you should do “all this” on your own. Teachers of all subjects have the responsibility to promote such aims, as well as Media Education, across the curriculum, since the media are part of our lives and influence us. Then, with regard to you being alone, I would like to say that the road to self-awareness requires solitude. But it lacks the depression of loneliness. On the way you slowly discover your very best friend: that is, yourself. You don't get alienated from yourself. But self-awareness, self acceptance and love for yourself does not, in any way, mean narcissism. Genuine self-awareness definitely leads you to care for others as well: to accept them, to communicate and to cooperate with them for the creation of wider connections or unities. And this, according to our friend Freud, means eros. *Eros* for life, for being open to things and people that are different, for communication, for cooperation. Closing up in one's self, due perhaps to fear or insecurity, leads to alienation, to lack of communication and renewal, to decadence. And this is a form of death or *thanatos*. I think it's time for you to open the door of your heart and your mind. It's time to listen to yourself, communicate with yourself and also reach out to the teacher of the next classroom.

Well, as I suggested above, self awareness and personal development needs to be promoted not just through Media Education as a school subject but through all school subjects. After all, Media Education as critical education needs to be promoted across the curriculum through a “cross-border” pedagogy²⁰. Secondly, I would like to add that it is important to face just what we fear with courage. It might be the only outlet from the dead-end of fear. The more you wrap up yourself in fear, the more it dominates you; it fights you, and so much the more will you fear and trap yourself. You won't be liberated. Take the first step. And then you may see that the teacher in the next classroom has the same fears. Reach out. Give her or him the message. And you might be surprised when you slowly discover a whole circle of people just like you around you. And then you might decide to break the vicious circle of ease.

Well, as I said, the most difficult thing is the “logic” of what seems to be easy because it blurs your sight; it blocks your vision; you live in a hazy “oneiric” climate; you live in the kind of cave Plato, another important educator, referred to ages ago. You thus don't see the “light”; you see “shadows” of things and you don't aspire to any deeper knowledge.

“Self-awareness, communication, cooperation, love, eros ...”, let's just say that you've convinced me. Let's just say, hypothetically! Don't get encouraged here! I'm just hypothesizing. Will the others accept it though? They'll surely think that this is all crazy. I'm afraid they won't want to.

It sounds rather good but very difficult.

Plato? Cave? Light? Shadows? What do you mean?

Well, listen to what Socrates is saying in Plato's Republic:
"Socrates: And now, I said, let me show in a figure how far our nature is enlightened or unenlightened: Behold! human beings living in an underground den, which has a mouth open towards the light and reaching all along the den; here they have been from their childhood and have their legs and necks chained so that they cannot move and can only see before them, being prevented by the chains from turning round their heads. Above and behind them a fire is blazing at a distance and between the fire and the prisoners there is a raised way; and you will see, if you look, a low wall built along the way, like the screen which marionette players have in front of them, over which they show the puppets... Glaucon: You have shown me a strange image and they are strange prisoners. Socrates: Like ourselves... and they see only their own shadows, or the shadows of one another, which the fire throws on the opposite wall of the cave"

Well, in a way, we may be "prisoners" of the media due to the manipulation of an elite which has power over the media. Thus, our minds make our chains through the false images cast by this elite. So, on the "wall", or the screen of TV, we can see just the "shadows" of events, of the reality represented to us by "marionette players" and by those who have access to the world outside the "cave", whereas they block our vision, our own ability to see the "light".

In a way, education means turning our vision and soul in the direction of the light that deeper knowledge can offer us, becoming conscious of and freeing ourselves from the 'passions' of stereotypes and limited perception.

I think there is! But, in order to manage this, I suggest that we need to undertake a process of self awareness as well as social awareness. We need to base education in general and Media Education in particular on a holistic, critical model and thus free ourselves from the 'bonds' of fragmented methods and tools.

No! A Cross-border Pedagogy needs to move across the "borders" of all school subjects. We have just remembered Socrates and Plato. So through language teaching, through philosophy and history, for example, we can promote important aims of media philosophy and methodology. Media Education, based on a Cross-border Pedagogy can be promoted across all school subjects through the collaboration of genuine educators.

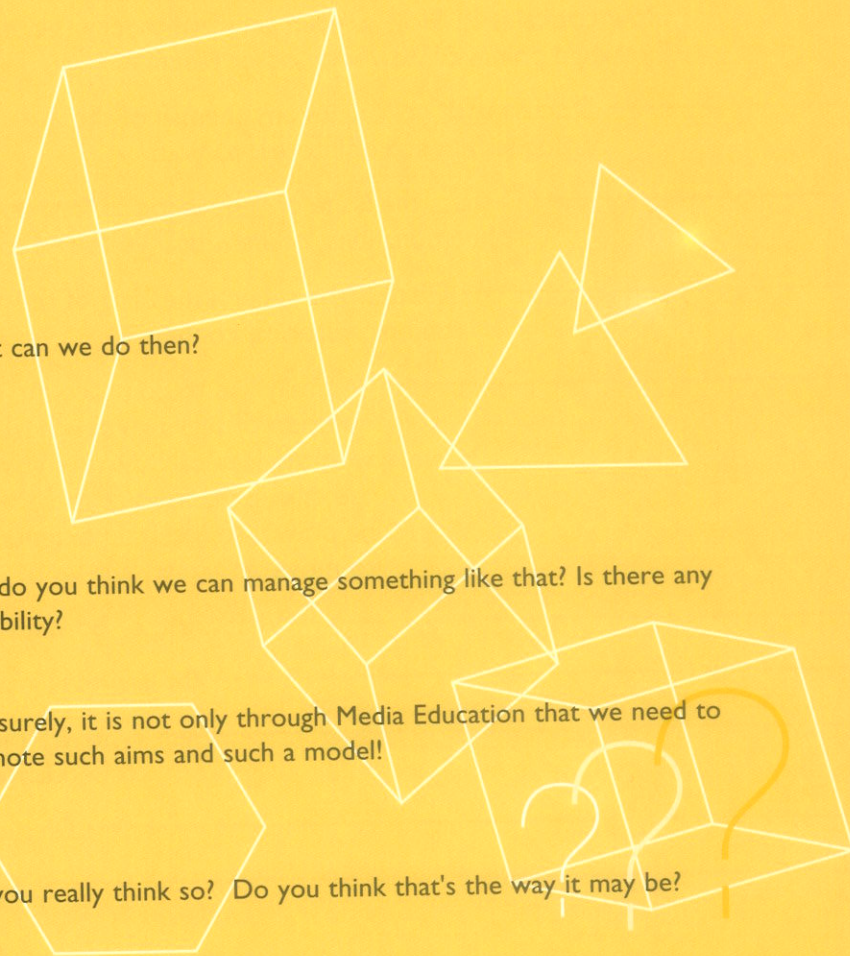
And what does all this have to do with the media and ourselves then?

What can we do then?

And do you think we can manage something like that? Is there any possibility?

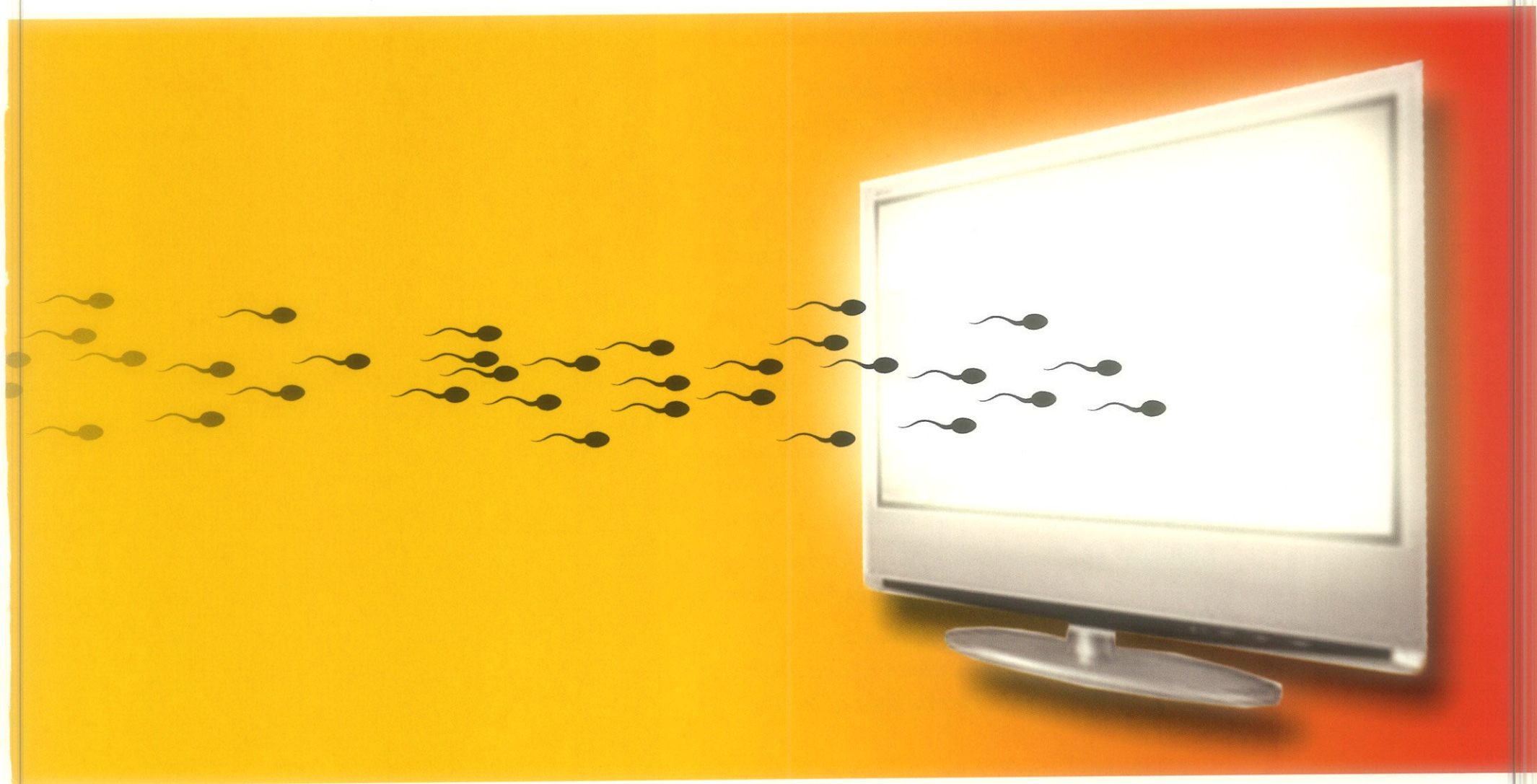
But, surely, it is not only through Media Education that we need to promote such aims and such a model!

Do you really think so? Do you think that's the way it may be?



Suggested questions to be discussed with educators:

- • Reflect on your approach to Media Education:
How critical is it? How is your personal theory related with practice?
Exchange points of view with other teachers.
- • Discuss with colleagues any themes of the
dialogue that are of interest to you.
- • Discuss the issue of “education as formation”
-of personalities, of identities-, referred to in the dialogue.
- • Discuss the general meaning of the allegory
and its historical context.
- • You may like to compare the allegory presented in this dialogue with other allegories where the
question of seeking knowledge is raised through the symbolism of darkness and light. For example,
with the idea of Odysseus going down to Hades (in Homer’s *Odyssey*) and his meeting there with
the talking shadows of the dead, a scene which Plato would surely know. Another comparison may
be drawn, to a certain extent, between this allegory and Dante’s *Inferno*. It is also interesting
to move on historically up to the present times and locate similar allegories.
- • What are the “borders” put by different school subjects?
- • Who are the “guards” of these “borders”?
- • Who are the “prisoners” of this pedagogy and what are the
consequences at a personal and social level?
- • Discuss ways of promoting a critical, “cross-border” pedagogy.
- • Discuss ways of promoting the aims of self awareness, social awareness
and critical reading of texts through different school subjects.
How could you use media texts in combination with the subject
matter you have to teach?



Step I

Present Plato's allegory to students through what Socrates is actually saying, as well as through the images from the painting by Achilleas which, in electronic form, are included in the PowerPoint presentation.

"Socrates: And now, I said, let me show in a figure how far our nature is enlightened or unenlightened: Behold! human beings living in an underground den, which has a mouth open towards the light and reaching all along the den; here they have been from their childhood and have their legs and necks chained so that they cannot move and can only see before them, being prevented by the chains from turning round their heads. Above and behind them a fire is blazing at a distance and between the fire and the prisoners there is a raised way; and you will see, if you look, a low wall built along the way, like the screen which marionette players have in front of them, over which they show the puppets..."

Glaucon: You have shown me a strange image and they are strange prisoners.

Socrates: Like ourselves... and they see only their own shadows, or the shadows of one another, which the fire throws on the opposite wall of the cave..."

Plato, "The Allegory of the Cave", The Republic, Book VII, also Plato, 1984.





“ Μετὰ ταῦτα δὴ, εἶπον, ἀπείκασον τοιούτῳ πάθει τὴν ἡμετέραν φύσιν παιδείας τε πέρι καὶ ἀπαιδευσίας. ἰδὲ γὰρ ἀνθρώπους οἷον ἐν καταγείῳ οἰκῇσιν σπηλαιώδει, ἀναπεπταμένην πρὸς τὸ φῶς τὴν εἴσοδον ἐχούσῃ μακρὰν παρὰ πᾶν τὸ σπήλαιον, ἐν ταύτῃ ἐκ παίδων ὄντας ἐν δεσμοῖς, καὶ τὰ σκέλη καὶ τοὺς αὐχένας, ὥστε μένειν τε αὐτοῦ[ς] εἰς τε τὸ πρόσθεν μόνον ὁρᾶν, κύκλῳ δὲ τὰς κεφαλὰς ὑπὸ τοῦ δεσμοῦ ἀδυνάτους περιάγειν· φῶς δὲ αὐτοῖς πυρὸς ἄνωθεν καὶ πόρρωθεν καόμενον ὀπισθεν αὐτῶν, μεταξὺ δὲ τοῦ πυρὸς καὶ τῶν δεσμωτῶν ἐπάνω ὁδόν, παρ’ ἣν ἰδὲ τειχίον παρφοδομημένον ὥσπερ τοῖς θαυματοποιοῖς πρὸ τῶν ἀνθρώπων πρόκειται τὰ παραφράγματα, ὑπὲρ ὧν τὰ θαύματα δεικνύουσιν.

Ὅρῳ, ἔφη.

Ὅρα τοίνυν παρὰ τοῦτο τὸ τειχίον φέροντας ἀνθρώπους σκεύη τε παντοδαπὰ ὑπερέχοντα τοῦ τειχίου καὶ ἀνδριάντας καὶ ἄλλα ζῶα λίθινά τε καὶ ξύλινα καὶ παντοῖα εἰργασμένα, οἷον εἰκὸς τοὺς μὲν φθεγγομένους, τοὺς δὲ σιγῶντας τῶν παραφερόντων.

Ἄτοπον, ἔφη, λέγεις εἰκόνα καὶ δεσμώτας ἀτόπους.
Ὅμοίους, ἡμῖν, ἦν δ’ ἐγώ· τοὺς γὰρ τοιούτους πρῶτον μὲν ἑαυτῶν τε καὶ ἀλλήλων οἶει ἂν τι ἑωρακέναι ἄλλο πλὴν τὰς σκιάς τὰς ὑπὸ τοῦ πυρὸς εἰς τὸ καταντικρὺ αὐτῶν τοῦ σπηλαίου προσπιπτούσας...”

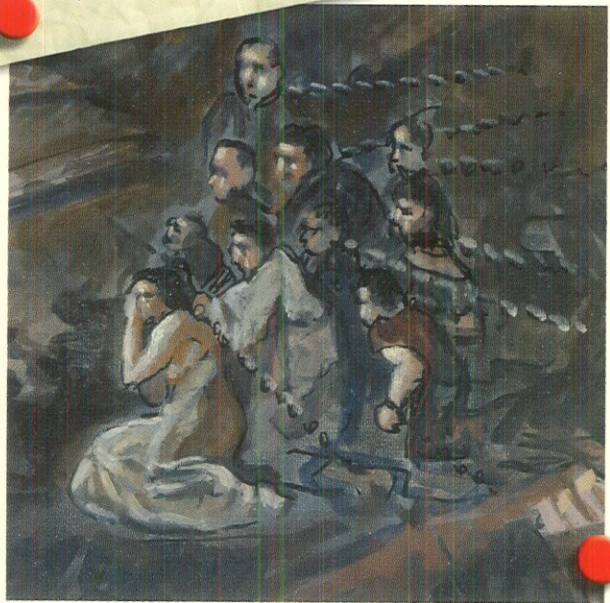
Step 2

Discuss particular themes of the allegory and their meaning. For example:

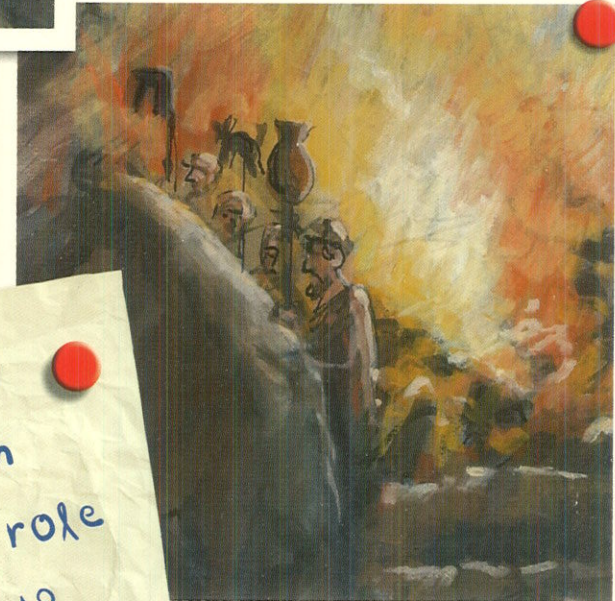
- Who are the prisoners?
- Why are they chained?
- Who are the guards?
- What is the reason why they have imprisoned the people?



What is the signification of the "puppets" that the prisoners see in front of them?



What is the signification and the role of the light?



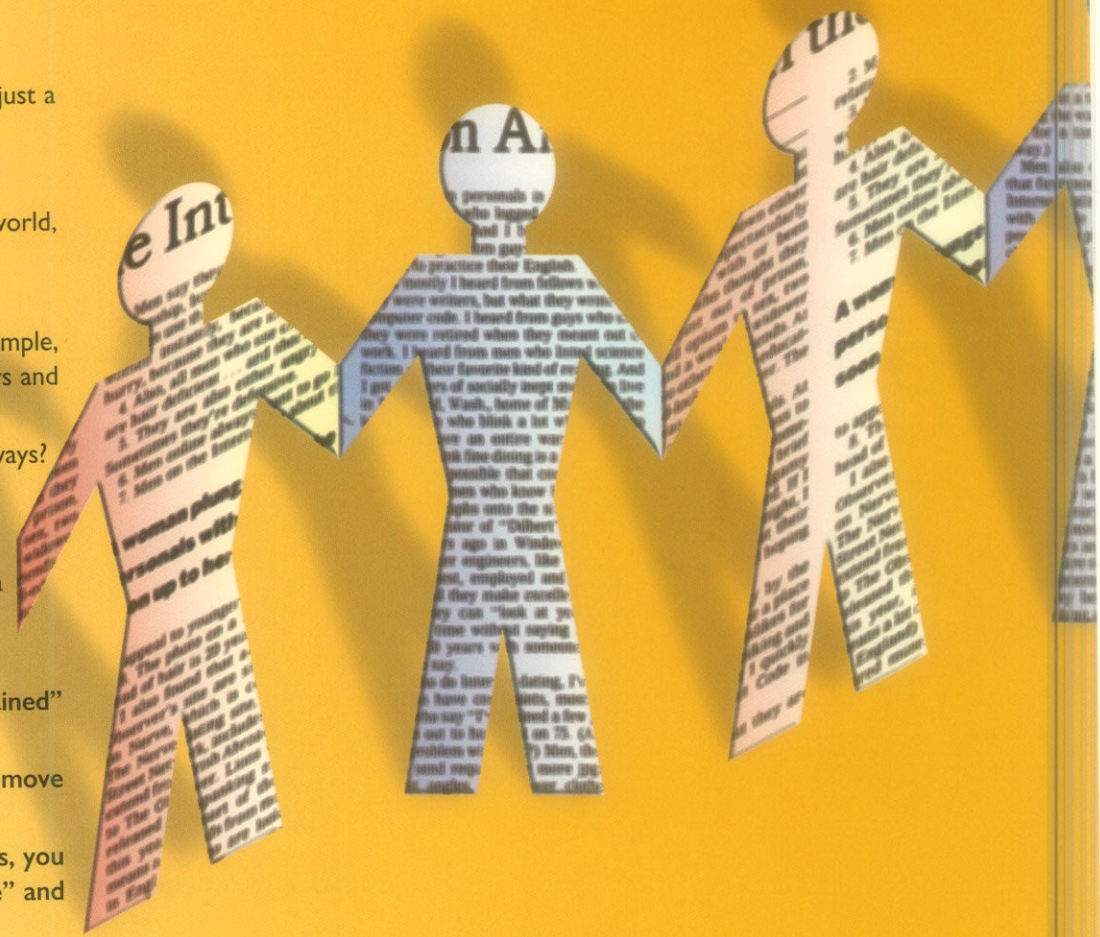
Step 3

Discuss with students the following suggested questions:

- What are the reasons why the guards -in that particular era- were preventing the prisoners from seeing the “light” and obliged them to see “shadows” of reality instead?
- What kind of “shadows” were these?
- What kind of reality was represented to them?
- In your view, were the prisoners conscious of the fact that what they saw was just a limited and distorted reflection, or “mimesis”, of reality?
- What is the symbolism of the “light”?

If we use a meta-allegory of Plato’s allegory in which the media represent the world, discuss with students the following suggested questions:

- Who are those who represent the world through the media?
- Do they represent the world objectively? If not, why does this happen (for example, through limits put on journalists about the way they can present identities, news and the world or journalists’ own stereotypes, values and ways of seeing, etc.)?
- Are viewers in a position to observe reality or are they “chained” in different ways?
- What is the nature of such chains today?
- What can we do in order to free ourselves from chains of different sorts?
- How can a person be supported to free her/himself from “chains” and be in a position to see the light through education?
- What, in your view, is the role of education and educators?
- In any historical period there are different reasons why people may be “chained” and different sources of imprisonment. Discuss.
- It is important to analyze something in the light of its historical context and move away from *historical amnesia*. Discuss.
- Try to paint the cave described by Socrates in your own way. Like Socrates, you can present this to your fellow-students later on explaining your “language” and signification through the text of your painting.



remember • remember • remember • remember

The broader aim of this activity is to help us *re-visit* and *remember* our personal and social reality in its historical perspective and continuity. In a process of critical self awareness it is important that we visit and analyze moments of our personal world related with past experiences and events.

re-visit • re-visit • re-visit • re-visit • re-visit • re-visit

PRACTICAL ACTIVITY



**Remembering
the self and the
world historically**

We need to recognize, understand and accept our personal history which influences our present condition and may influence our future condition as well. The same process is required for social awareness in the context of which social issues need to be analyzed in their historical background.

re-visit • re-visit • re-visit • re-visit • re-visit • re-visit • re-visit • re-visit • re-visit • re-visit

remember • remember • remember • remember • remember • remember

Dominant memory

What we tend to do, more often than not, is to avoid remembering for various reasons: for example, because we take the historical past as unimportant, or even irrelevant, for our present condition, because of traumatic experiences which we find easier to repress, or because we are not given the opportunity to talk about memories, let alone analyze them critically. Yet, remembering is a necessary condition in our attempt to know our personal and social identity better and, thus, the role of memory is important. Memory influences the way through which identities are constructed at a private and collective or public level.

Memory is a theme which has attracted the interest of analysis and research because it is argued that the media promote a **dominant memory** which influences us to visit the past and remember things according to the principles and values of *dominant ideology*.

Foucault was the first to refer to the term *popular memory*. He defined this as the accounts of the past produced in oral or written form by those who have no access to the production of published texts or formal historical accounts. Television and the cinema are among those institutions which promote the dissemination of “formal” stories aiming at the “occupation” of *popular memory* and the exercise of power and control over the audience through influencing persons to understand and remember reality, the world and themselves in particular ways which are presented as “truths”.

Thus, what is shown to people is not exactly what they have been or have seen, but what they *should remember* they have been or seen. According to Foucault, this process may finally lead to a *reprogramming* of popular memory which, although existent, has no means of expression and dissemination outwards. In this way public knowledge is produced through the repression of private knowledge.

According to the field of cultural studies *memory* is considered to be the *product of social processes* through which the past is re-presented in cultural forms. Representation, therefore, is a political issue, since those who lack the power to define their interests (for example, women and other social groups) and to participate in the decisions that affect them will be subject to the definitions, decisions and performance productions of others who have the power²¹ to produce definitions and performances that serve their own interests. «This need not be a deliberate process of oppression: it may just seem to be “common sense”...» (Marshment, 1993, p. 123).

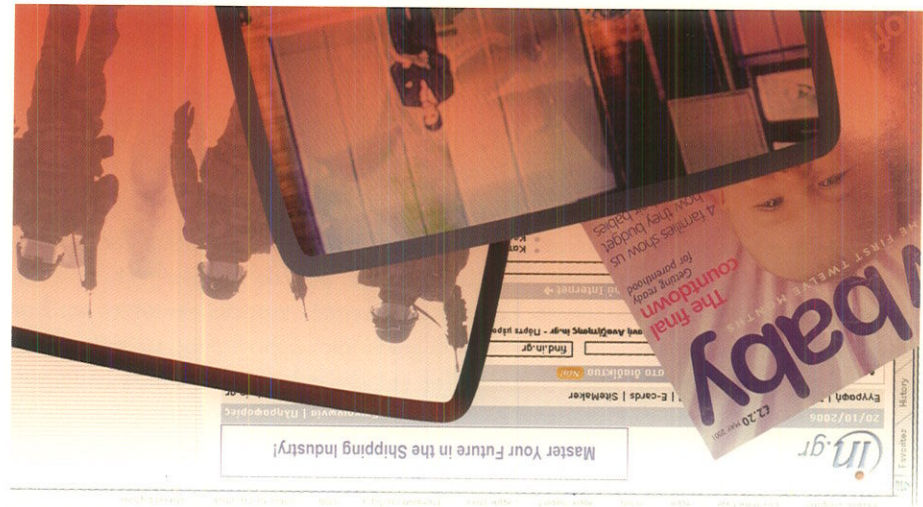
It is unfortunate that these decisions and actions of the dominant groups are often supported by the powerless as well, mainly because -through the influence of ideological and historical state apparatuses like the media- they internalize the values of the dominant ideology and thus see their oppression and self-alienation as a natural condition, while they have the feeling that they are free and, therefore, they were free to choose their subjugation²².

21 According to the relevant literature, in our patriarchal societies these are usually white men of the bourgeoisie who look at the world in a Euro-centric and, in general, west-centred way.

22 For a more analytical discussion of the issue see Althusser, 1971.

In the area of cultural studies and communication what is considered to be an important point of analysis is the way through which memory is energized in everyday life as performance. A special working group²³, known as "The Popular Memory Group" relocates popular memory in the area of cultural studies in the context of the theoretical work of Althusser (1971) and Gramsci (1971). *The Popular Memory Group* supports the view that the Mass Media and the institutions of cultural heritage should be considered as "historical apparatuses"²⁴, because they produce a "dominant memory" which intends to secure consensus about the way the past is understood and, therefore, reproduced.

Memory, as a form of representation of the past, is produced through a two-fold way of expression. In the public sphere it is produced through the polarization between popular and dominant memory on the one hand, and, on the other, through the kinds of public representation and the forms of memory competing with the forms of this representation through objects belonging to the private sphere (for example, letters, photographic albums, diaries, etc.).



Memory is a fundamental element of what is present, past and future. However, as we have seen, personal (or popular) memory is oppressed through the promotion of *dominant memory* and it is, thus, more difficult to "recover" memory. In the era of electronic and mass communication, it is argued that the human body or subject is being robbed of its memories and that the informational function of the media is such that it makes us forget: **the media exhaustion of news incites historical amnesia.**

Recent research refers to the *false memory syndrome* developed to a large extent by the interference of *photographic, digitalized* and *advertising images* which manipulate ways of seeing and make it possible for memories to be *implanted* in the individual. Being, personality, memory and the unconscious are redefined through the development of a *new grammar* of informatics. It seems that in the in-formation era we are witnessing the *formation* of an optical imagery with no clear base, no permanency beyond that of *mental* or *instru-mental* visual memory.

At the same time, and while memory and the past is negated, there is a tendency to emphasize and to programme the future. Having forgotten the past, we seem to be attempting to develop the future not on the basis of humanistic values and on the recognition of our humility in the context of a universal becoming, but on the basis of

²³ Birmingham University, Centre of Modern Cultural Studies.

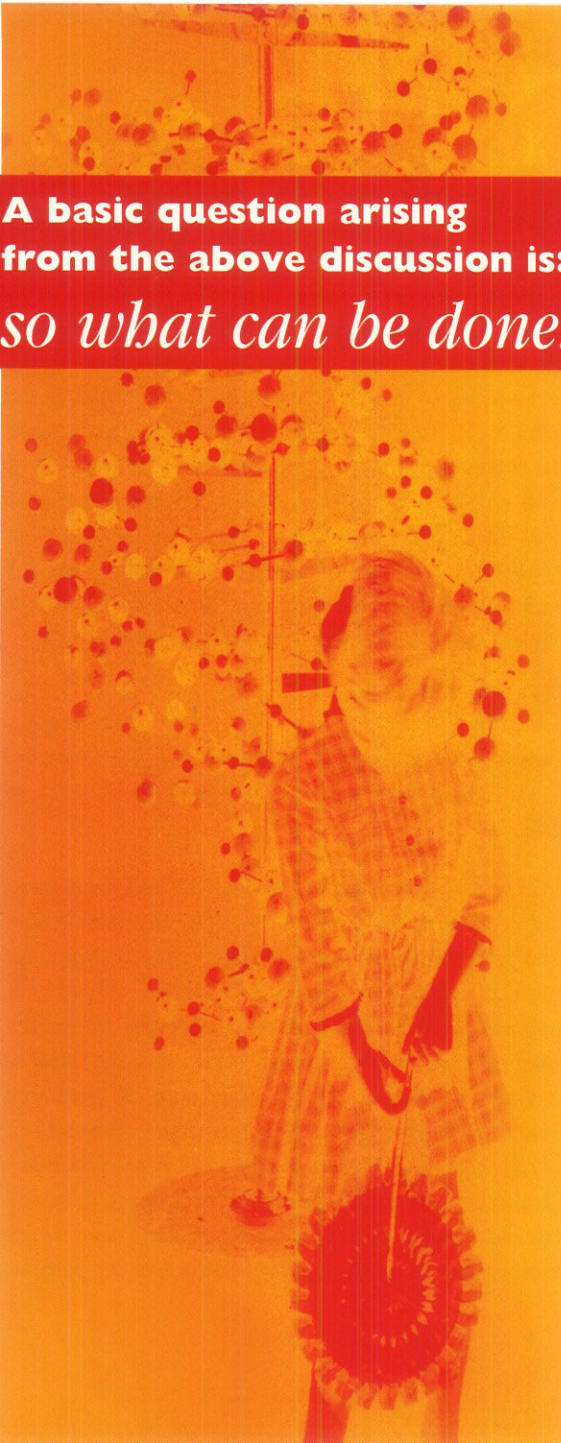
²⁴ This term is analogous to the term "ideological state apparatuses" used by Althusser (1971). See also Althusser and Poulantzas (in Camov 1990 pp. 125-176).



arrogance expressed through a kind of possessive individualism which seeks to possess and control the future as well. Thus, based on our finite abilities and knowledge which we view as infinite, we struggle to develop the future based on inventions of the past and present. In this way we tend to repeat the present and construct the future as an extension, a *prosthesis* on what is already existent and known, as an imitation or *mimesis* of the present, depriving development of one of its basic elements, the unknown, and baptizing as “future”, the known past and present. This is apparent, for example, in the texts of Superman’s scriptwriters who emphasize the powers of cartoon super heroes. They promise an almost non-human extension of physical capability in space as well as the ability to outwit time through an emphasis on *limitless agency, will and potential* of the individual who is supposed to be able to do everything. They thus subject their hero, Superman, to a process of repetition, of action or adventure outside every day time. The stories thus produced occur in a kind of “oneiric climate” (Lury, 1998) where what has happened before and what will happen afterwards appear extremely hazy.

As a consequence, it seems that the Cartesian “*I think, therefore, I am*” is gradually replaced by the belief that “*I can, therefore, I am*”. Yet another consequence of the above is that there is an attempt to predetermine the unknown future which is rather conceived as a known past and present repeated or a future perfect which is “*past perfected*” (*ibid*).

According to the *Popular Memory Group* the promotion of individuals’ self awareness can play a crucial role in the critical reading of texts and it has a political dimension. However, as they argue²⁵, a political programme of “know thyself” makes important the analysis of the kind of self which exists for someone to know. Therefore, memory is crucial for such an awareness. Self awareness is particularly important today, because, under the influence of consumerism which promotes the idea of *homo consumens - economicus*, as well as because of the promotion of dominant memory, the person is often alienated from her/him self and is possibly trapped in a false, insecure and narcissistic *consciousness*. **Critical memory** then is an important medium through which the individual could uncover *beliefs of common sense* (Johnson and Dawson, 1982, p. 214) and proceed to a process of personal development which is also a prerequisite for social development through psychologically healthy persons and responsible citizens.



A basic question arising from the above discussion is:
so what can be done?

If one takes into consideration the fact that the dominant culture defines what is important to be transmitted -through the media, through electronic communication and through institutions of cultural heritage- and to be remembered as history, objectivity, knowledge and truth, one realizes the importance of problematising dominant memory and promoting critical memory. Thus, an answer to the question posed is that what needs to be done is to promote critical memory in the context of an educational project aiming at self and social awareness and recognizing the importance of critical thinking and critical reading of social and cultural texts of the present and the past.

In conclusion, we would like to emphasize certain issues related to *communication* and *memory*. In a project promoting self and socially aware citizens what is quite important is:

- **Realisation of the fact that *representation is a political issue* because representing implies *shaping identities, influencing democracy and institutions*,**
 - **In-depth research and analysis of the media texts and performances promoted through representations, mythologies and rituals based on concepts and stereotypes of the dominant, patriarchal ideology,**
 - **Problematisation of the reasons why the media systematically promote a distorted and discriminatory picture of the world,**
 - **Representation of the world by self and socially aware persons who will try to represent reality in different and critical ways,**
 - **Promoting a critical, *radical* reading of texts,**
- **Moving beyond critical reading towards the production of alternative texts based on innovative performances which need to be promoted and marketed in dynamic ways. Through these texts popular memory needs to be recognized and energized so that it can resist dominant memory in an agonistic way. *Critical memory* needs to be promoted so that we can re-visit and remember the past, the future, the self and the world in new ways characterized by a stance of respect for otherness, for identity and existence, for life in the present and the future.**

General aim of the activity

The general aim of this practical activity is to promote a historical perspective in the process of analyzing oneself and the world.

Such a perspective facilitates a holistic approach which is necessary for the critical deconstruction of texts.

A necessary condition for thinking historically is memory and, therefore, the emphasis of this practical activity is on

critical memory

Indicative objectives

This activity aims to support participants in:

- Becoming conscious of the importance of looking at things in their historical continuity,
- Recognizing the crucial role of memory for such a project,
- Becoming aware of the distinction between popular and dominant memory,
- Realizing that today popular memory is inhibited, while dominant memory is promoted through the media and through centres of cultural heritage and the cinema, which function as historical apparatuses influencing the construction of identity and the world,
- Analyzing basic ways which are used for this purpose,
- Discussing the reasons why this is happening,
- Becoming aware of the necessity for promoting critical memory, and
- Discussing methods and ways for the development of innovative texts which can represent alternative aspects and “expressions” of reality to the ones promoted through the dominant texts of the media.

SUGGESTED METHODOLOGY

Step 1

The educator/trainer may start the activity by introducing participants to the theme of memory in different ways. For example, through asking general questions such as the following:

- Do you often find the opportunity to talk about memories? How do you feel about this?
- Do you think that remembering is important? What is the reason for this?
- Do the media help us remember past events? If so, what kind of events and in what way?
- What is the role of remembering historical events?

In the discussion developed at this stage it is important to point out the role of examining an event in its historical perspective: past, present and future.

Step 2

Participants are given the questionnaire on "memory" presented in the Appendix and are asked to answer the first set of the questions as quickly as possible.

Step 3

The educator presents the questionnaire in the PowerPoint form. After each question, and while the images that support it are presented, students are invited to express their points of view on this suggested question. Through the discussion, the educator finds the opportunity to mention important issues about the role of memory, of reading a text critically and of positioning it in a historical context. Alternatively, the educator can choose to use the questions and the images through the Slideshow version of presentation included in the CD Rom.

This version is accompanied with the musical piece "A flash in the Vosporos" by Evanthia Rebutsika.

Step 4

Students are asked to have a quick look at the second set of questions included in the questionnaire. With those questions in mind they are asked to watch the video.

Step 5 Video presentation

Communication
and Memory:
"Remembering"
the Future?

Step 6

Discussion on the questionnaire items, as well as on any other point participants wish to raise, follows. At this stage the concept of popular and dominant memory can be analyzed in more detail. For example, participants may be asked whether in the context of the European Union they think that citizens living and working in a foreign country find the opportunity to talk about historical events related to their place of origin. An interesting point to explore with students is whether, in the context of globalization in particular, we are encouraged to remember things in a similar or in a different way and the reasons why this is the case. Who produces history today and what way, may be another interesting theme.

PRODUCTION ACTIVITIES

- A. Students may be asked to try to bring to mind a memory (e.g. from their childhood, from school or family life) and to draw it with a symbol. They can then present these drawings in pairs or in small groups and, finally, they can talk to each other about their symbols, the experience as a whole and the role of memory.
- B. Discussing suggestions about future work. Some indicative ideas:
- Visiting a museum and recording examples of paintings which are relevant to the discussion that took place in the classroom.
 - Organizing collaborative projects, based on *Active Research*, and aiming at the development of their own iconic texts (paintings, photographic material, or even their own videos) which can promote personal and critical memory.

APPENDIX

On the role of memory

A. Please think about the following questions and try to answer them as quickly as possible:

1. Do you often feel the need to talk about memories? YES ☐ NO ☐

Can you think of some reasons why this is the case?

2. How often do you find the opportunity to talk about memories and how do you feel about this?

3. Are you afraid of memories? If so, why?

4. Would you prefer not to remember past things and live in a condition of manufactured «eternal sunshine»?

5. Do institutions of cultural heritage influence the way in which we remember the past?

6. In what way do certain historical, political, religious events or work of art influence memory?

7. Is one encouraged today to remember things and situations of one's personal or social life in a critical way?

f Yes, in what way? _____

f No, what is the reason? _____

8. It is argued that, in the context of globalization and mainly through the media, people are influenced to remember things and the world in a vague and similar way, regardless of their personal and cultural histories.

Do you agree or disagree with this argument? Explain the reason/s why.

B. Questions to be discussed after the video presentation

1. What is your general feeling after the video presentation?

2. Which of the ideas suggested in the video can you identify with?

3. Is it necessary to remember the past in a process of self awareness? Explain the reason/s of your position.

4. Do you agree with the argument that we try to invent or to construct the future absolutely based on the data of the present? If yes,
• Why do you think this is the case?
• What are some possible consequences of this stance?

5. Which kind of attitude towards "remembering the future" would you like to suggest?

6. What are some other points you would like to discuss?

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ACTIVE EUROPE

The C i t i z

This part of the periodical is a space where critical readers of media texts as well as of educational and social phenomena at large have the

Deconstructing Social Reality

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counselling

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AN CITIZENSHIP

e n s' F o r u m

opportunity to express points of view based on critical reading and to suggest ways of acting and intervening, aiming at social development.

Suggestions for Reconstructing Social Reality

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Epilogue

Democracy in the context of globalization, electronic communication and consumerism is at risk. The word demo-cracy (in the context of which the “demos” -i.e. the people- rules) seems to be used as an empty word in an alienating, fragmented -but also fragmenting- and rather “empty” world. Face-to-face human communities tend to be replaced by e-communities. The subject of education becomes more and more dis-located in terms of educational environments related to concrete space and time boundaries. Is education dis-located too? Do we need education and educators in the traditional relationship of face-to- face communication and interaction or can traditional educational processes be replaced by communities created in the cyberspace? For us the answer is clear.

In the context of time and space compression through the development of technology, genuine educators cannot be extinguished and replaced by “machines” which tend to be regarded as “technological deities”. The point is: do we have such educators who can support students and citizens develop in a holistic way so that they can cope with change and transitions and contribute to the transformation of the social world and to se-curing democracy?

Particularly intellectuals have a *political responsibility* to provide answers to such questions. It seems that a *universal conspiracy* is directing us towards the fulfillment of the “dept” of economy towards education in more humanistic terms. It also seems to direct us to an orientation towards the recognition of the value of the person as a being necessary for the development of the whole social net at present as well as in the future. Media educators and educators in general need to take this into consideration and not “deify” information and information channels. Let us listen to Socrates “talk” about the role of information and the educator...

«Surely, I said, information [knowledge] is the food of the soul; and we must take care, my friend, that the Sophist does not deceive us when he praises what he sells, like the dealers wholesale or retail who sell the food of the body; ...For there is far greater peril in buying information than in buying meat and drink.»

Plato, Protagoras

Announcements

Forthcoming events:

The next International Conference of SY.N.TH.E.SI. to be held in Athens, in September 2007:

DEMOCRACY, CITIZENSHIP AND THE MEDIA

Information for the conference and for membership:

www.syn-thesi.gr

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